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GERALDINE MAYNARD;

OR,

THE ABDUCTION.

A TALE OF THE DAYS OF SHAKSPEARE.

BY CAPTAIN CURLING,

AUTHOR OF "THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE," "JOHN OF ENGLAND,"
"SHAKSPEARE, THE LOVER, THE POET," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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GERALDINE MAYNARD,

OR

THE ABDUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the poet found that all was lost, or rather suspected that such would prove to be the case, he turned sadly towards Sandwich; and soon afterwards hearing that the Queen was on her progress to London, and all her followers upon the tramp, he also started homewards.

"Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile—a,
Your merry heart goes all the way,
Your sad one but a mile—a."

By footpath and by every other path, by style or gate, or high road or by-road—there was indeed rare fun, rare dancing, and rare carousing along that old thoroughfare back again to London ; with those who " followed in the cry," more so perhaps than amongst those who made up the " glittering file" which pertained to Royalty itself. Old Canterbury, the first stage homewards, rang with revelry. Its hostels were crowded and crammed to the very heart's content of hosts, hostesses, and servitors. Pottlepot toasts and healths " five fathoms deep," were quaffed to her Majesty, and to my Lord of Leicester, and

a dozen lords besides; roaring blades, with coronets emblazoned on back and breast, met and fraternised, or squabbled and fought in the High Street just as it happened, that is to say, just as the magnates, their masters, felt and behaved towards each other.

Oh, there was fun, rare sport, rare life, in rare old England in the palmy days of rare old Queen Bess. A bowery garden was that county of Kent, too, with its orchards, its thick woods, its verdant meadows, and its hills and dales.

Kent, in the Commentaries Cæsar wrote, was indeed called "the civilest part of all our isle."

Nay, we think that we could point out the very garden where Mr. Alexander Iden walked and talked when he stumbled upon

Jack Cade, and fought, overcame, and made him prisoner.

“But oh, but oh,”—if it could have been seen or imagined, the squabbles and quarrels in regard to the lodgings and the lodgements of the various guests, high and low, along this road, during her Majesty’s homeward progress; crammed and overcrowded as they were; the bickerings, jealousies, hard words, and harder blows, &c., of all and sundry, would have sufficiently astonished our more modern tourists and railroad excursionists.

Elizabeth’s maids of honour were troublesome on most occasions, more especially so during a royal progress. Nothing contented them. If my Lady Frances Howard had a better room or larger bed than my Lady

Mary Percy, how she would fret, fume, and complain.

Sir Walter Raleigh pronounced these sweet creatures worse than witches, because twice as dangerous to encounter. Sir Fulke Greville more gallantly likened them to the pixies and fairies who broke and upset everything, not only milk pails and pans, but men's hearts as well, and Sir Fulke was right.

Then again there was always war between the Queen's ladies and her Majesty's gentlemen of the household. Sir Francis Knollys, whose office it was to be near the Queen in her travels, was driven well nigh frantic during this Kentish excursion; for as he affirmed, when he was fatigued and tired with his day's journey, they would "so frisk

and hey" about, that it was in vain for him to try to sleep in his quarters, or even to go to bed at all.

At Rochester, spite of his remonstrances, the fair bevy were so unusually obstreperous, that after her Majesty had retired to the chamber allotted to her, he marched into the apartment in which these ladies were located, and which unluckily was next to his own, in deshabelle, and with his book in his hand, and an enormous pair of spectacles on his nose, paraded up and down, declaiming in Latin in a loud voice. Some of the maids were so startled at this apparition, that they fled half dressed, others entreated his absence, but all in vain; there he walked, book in hand, for some hours, declaring that if he was not allowed a quiet sleep

in his own dormitory, he would at all hazards spend the night in theirs.

* * *

During this eventful progress, our friend the great Magician and Medico, Doctor Dee, marched amongst the retinue. Certes, it must be confessed, according to all accounts this great philosopher had grown into favour at Court; so much so that her Majesty would hardly pay any of her accustomed visits, or make a long progress, without his presence. Nay, she now not only loved to consult him about her health, but also consulted with him on the complicated affairs of Europe.

“By our royal word, Doctor,” she said one day, as she submitted her leg, which ailed her, to his inspection, “if I am some-

what lame, France and Scotland shall find that my affairs do not halt too."

The great Alchemist laughed, and whilst he applied an unguent to her royal limb, applauded her spirit to "the very echo which does applaud again."

The Doctor, indeed, now travelled with six horses and three carriages when and where the roads would allow of such state,* and when they would not, he was frequently seen mounted upon a splendid Flemish steed, and followed or preceded by several armed attendants.

"Since I am crept in favour with myself,
I will maintain it at some little cost,"

the Doctor perhaps thought and quoted.

* See Life of Doctor Dee.

However that might be, certain it is that prosperity and favour had a good deal warped and spoiled the man, so that he had grown arrogant and overbearing. During this journey, however, he found one who succeeded in putting down his pride a trifle, and showed him that he was not quite first rate and infallible in all things, and this one was no other than our little friend, the poor apothecary of Old Chepe.

Shakspere who had found out the worth and truth of this poor starveling, had introduced him to his friend and patron the Earl of Southampton. The Earl, who was himself in advance in all things in the age in which he lived, had appointed the old man as his physician, and on the present occasion he travelled amongst the Earl's followers.

A simple-minded but a most erudite man, professing nothing, and apparently caring for nothing. One who had passed his life in study under difficulties, and had thrown aside as useless and contemptible many of the chimeras his more fortunate brethren were so much taken up by and involved in.

With Doctor Dee, his brother philosopher he had many disputes ; he held the so-called great man in most profound contempt, and it must have been highly diverting to have heard their disputes at a period when Queen and nobles were alike secretly employing and amusing themselves with the now exploded chimeras of alchymy.

CHAPTER II.

QUEEN ELIZABETH on the second day of her progress—march perhaps it would be better to term it—homewards, halted on Boughton Hill, a spot situate midway between the towns of Canterbury and Sittingbourne. It was her custom oftentimes to halt thus, and refresh herself, her retinue, and her followers, by a short or long sojourn in some pleasant spot, some sweet locality where the prospect

was fine, and the surrounding scene in all things to her taste; and as she was not at all scrupulous about the property of others, or their game preserves, if they had any, and as she always had hawks and hounds and huntsmen, and falconers attendant, she frequently played the part of huntress on these occasions.

In the present instance she was specially pleased, and in exceeding good spirits and temper. Accordingly with herself and ladies and the attendant cavaliers, she drew aside under the shade of melancholy boughs, and ordered such refreshments as were provided to be immediately spread in the bowery forest.

And oh, if we could but have looked upon that scene at that time, we might perchance

have found much to remind us of Arden Forest, its charming glades, its exiled huntsmen, its dappled deer, and even the poor sequestered stag which drank from the brook that brawled along the wood.

Camped out, somewhat removed from the road, and under the shade on either hand, were various groups, huntsmen, dogs, and hawks, servitors and wains; men-at-arms in their gorgeous suits, and lastly, in the spot chosen by herself—the Queen and her ladies, and such nobles as were in attendance.

Everyone to their taste, is, we know, an old saying, dating perhaps from the old days we are now endeavouring to picture, and accordingly whilst her Majesty and followers, seated in a pleasant shade, were refreshing themselves with pasties of the doe, and

flaskets of muscadine, there in the hot sun in the dusty road, themselves as hot, walked, talked, and disputed the two scientific men who were travelling with the expedition, Doctor Dee, and the weird-looking apothecary, Basset.

"I snap my fingers at your projected elixir," said the latter, as he promenaded the dusty road; "it's a fallacy, and you know it."

"A fallacy, is it?" returned Dee.

"Yes, and you do but dupe yourself as well as those good people sitting out there. Perpetual life and youth, eh? ha! ha! I would that you could find it for your own sake."

"You will live, I hope, to see it, old as you are," said Dee contemptuously.

"The boon of immortality would not be welcome to me if it did come," returned Basset.

"But it would to yonder lady with the crisp snaky locks," said Dee, pointing to the Queen.

"He who makes her next wig will renew her youth in better fashion than you will ever do," returned Basset.

"You believe in nothing," said Dee angrily, and again looking with profound contempt at Basset.

"Sede et circumspecte. Then shalt thou say, Gloria Deo in excelsis," returned Basset, sitting down upon a bank, and looking around. "I believe little of your occult sciences, or your acts of divination and transmutation, but I believe in this book," and Basset took from his breast an old clasped Bible.

"Come," he continued, "I'll tell you more. I believe that neither yourself nor her Majesty believe one half you pretend to. Through your agency she manages to pry into the plots and associations going on abroad and at home, nay more, I believe that her Majesty makes you an instrument to practise upon the credulity of other princes."

"You think so?"

"I do."

"Such thoughts are dangerous to whisper, even seated as we are apart from all listeners here, the birds of the air may carry the clatter," said Dee.

"Perhaps so, let them carry it," returned Basset; "and now let me ask you a question."

"Ask it," returned Dee.

"Did you not cause yonder vain woman to look into that magic glass or mirror of yours one day?"

"I did so."

"And did not yonder dark gipsy, yonder earl there, coax or bribe you to let him stand so that his own hang-dog visage might be reflected in it as that of the man whom the fates had destined to be her lord?"

"Where heard you that?" inquired Dee, turning somewhat red.

"Marry, by *my* art," returned Basset.

Doctor Dee looked askance at his companion, he began to dislike him more and more; he was beaten with his own weapons.

"Now where in the name of the foul

fiend could he have learned that?" he said to himself.

"You're nothing but a dreamer. You deceive yourself," continued Basset after a pause, in which he seemed to enjoy his opponent's discomfiture. Ha! ha! a dreamer, nothing else."

"A dreamer, eh?" said Dee.

"Yes, and you dream impossibilities," replied Basset, "you think, for instance, to discover an universal solvent or alchemy?"

"I have found it," said Dee triumphantly. "I will prove it to you, nay, if you will visit me at Mortlake I will show it to you."

"You will show it me?" returned Basset.

“ Yes.”

“ An universal solvent ?”

“ Most unquestionably.”

“ The alchymy, and you have found it then ?”

“ I have.”

“ What vessel contains it ?”

Doctor Dee seemed thunderstruck.

“ I never thought of that,” he said.

“ Not you. If you have it, you must have found that being an universal solvent, it must dissolve all vessels with the same rapacious force it dissolves all substances.* No, no, you have not found the universal solvent : but I have.”

“ Where is it ?”

* The Alchymists never seem to have thought of this.

"There," cried Basset, pointing to the circle of courtiers with the Queen at their head, and who were all sitting under the trees feasting and carousing at a tremendous rate. "The gastric juice, most profound Sir, is your only real solvent. The stomach dissolves all things that are put into it, but turns not against itself."

Doctor Dee rose, and from the bank on which he had seated himself, and again walked up and down, puffing and blowing like a harpooned whale.

"This fellow is of exceeding honesty," he said to himself, "yet my master. He has found me out. I believe him to be most profound; nay, I would poison him, but sooth to say, I believe he would have an antidote for every drug I could administer."

Basset rose as he finished his harangue, and walked off to join his friend Shakspeare, who as he was now travelling homewards too, had chosen to join the Queen's retinue.

"To daff the world aside, and let it pass" amidst the throng, and oh if our present prepsiring, rushing, tearing, railroad population could but halt to look back upon the leisure, the freedom, the pleasurable existence their ancestors enjoyed, they might perhaps be induced to take breath, pause, and enjoy themselves too.

Look at those sturdy frames and ruddy English faces, those men and women who without dread of open air and exercise, are laughing, talking, and washing down pasties of the doe and fat capons with strong beer or water from the brook. Those are

not men and women who have passed through childhood and early youth in being crammed with the useless lore they will never have occasion for, and learning languages they will never be called upon to speak, whose mature age consequently is but a slow and gradual decline.*

As her Majesty looked around after her feed, she felt so pleased with the bowery scene, that she resolved, *coûte qui coûte*, to summon her head huntsman and shoot a stag there. Looking about, she paused for a few moments ere she did so; the pause being caused by the sight of numerous puffs of smoke which emanated from the

* Fast ripen, fast rot, is the true virtue of your medler, and if people like to go through life as if racing for death, who can help it?

mouths of several of her nobles and others attendant. The habit of smoking had indeed just then come into fashion, but it was entirely a lordly enjoyment.*

“By my fay, and as heaven made me,” said the Queen to Sir Walter Raleigh, who was smoking a small bowled pipe in most approved fashion, “By our Lady’s grace, Sir Walter, but this same weed hath to our

* Men of low degree, in those days, could not aspire to so costly a luxury as smoking a pipe; nay, some of the great lords it is said expended as much as three and four hundred pounds a year in tobacco alone. Times are greatly altered since Raleigh introduced the Virginian weed to the gallants of Elizabeth’s Court; for though smoking is still much in vogue in high places, the practice must now be considered as pre-eminently the poor man’s solace.

apprehension a most villainous odour; it poisons the air as much as it offends our nostrils. Away with that filthy pipe. And you, my Lord of Leicester," she continued, rising from the bank on which she had been sitting, "eschew so vile a habit, and call the huntsmen to attend us here. Methinks in yonder glade the deer seem absolutely begging a bolt from our crossbows."

CHAPTER III.

"WHOSE grounds are these, so carefully imparked?" inquired her Majesty, as her foresters broke through some pailings to let her pass after she had sufficiently amused herself and slain several stags.

The moon had risen whilst the Queen carried away by her love of sport, had been engaged in deer-stalking as it was then practised.

"Whose woods are these?" she again inquired of her attendants.

"Mine an' it so please ye, Madam," said a voice close beside her, the owner of which had advanced from the other side of the pailings she had so unceremoniously broken through. "Mine, an' it so please ye, and these deer, an' it so further please ye, are mine too," added the speaker, pointing to the slain stags.

Her Majesty had little respect for forest laws, or the owners of forests either; she looked with no small surprise at the speaker, and as she did so, she bethought her of some being in some of the fairy tales she had either read or been told of in her childhood. Ricquet with the Tuft, we believe was not an invented individual in that reign, but

if he was, there in his own greenwoods she might have imagined him to stand before her.

A dwarfish man, excessively broad in girth, clad in green habiliments from top to toe, and looking as if he thought he could never be green enough, stood immediately in her path. Green hat, green feather, green doublet and hosen, green boots, and even green rosettes at the insteps; a short green cloak, green velvet sword sheath, belts of green, and even the hunting pole he carried in his left hand was green also.

The singular looking little man stood stock still before her Majesty, and neither bent knee or doffed beaver, but simply looked first at the Queen, and then at the slaughtered deer.

"Art thou thus boldened, man, by thy ignorance of our person and presence, or art thou insolent by design?" inquired the Queen, staring at this singular apparition.

"Ignorant as dirt, an' it so please ye," said the green man, "but not quite so patient. These deer here are mine," he again said, pointing to some half a dozen slaughtered stags as they lay upon the turf at his feet.

"Do you know before whom you stand, fellow?" said Leicester, stepping up to the square built little stranger.

The green man looked at him from top to toe for some moments.

"Better than she before whom I stand knows me," he returned. "I know you,

too, by description, my Lord of Leicester. The dark earl, the gipsy, the handsome Leicester, eh. Ugh, an ugly man when all's done, methinks."

"Know you where you are, sirrah?" again iterated Leicester in high dudgeon.

"Oh, Lord, Sir," replied the green man, "most assuredly do I know where I am. I stand here on mine own lands, lord of myself and of them too; those deer I again say are my deer. Your Majesty—for I do also opine that I speak to the Majesty of England—is quite welcome to them and to all I have, premising, however, that no person has a right to them unless I give them."

She who could unfrock a bishop and behead a sister queen, stood like a delinquent

before the little gentleman in the green suit.

"Who is this person?" she said contemptuously, addressing Sir Francis Knollys, "and what does all this mean. We thought ourself Queen of England, and that all its parks and avenues, and all the game they contain, were our own when and where we like to take them."

The little man uttered a sort of inward chuckle, or laugh.

"Nay, but it hath not come to that yet," he said, "and peradventure by "Heaven's grace" it never will. According to the laws of this your Majesty's realm, those bucks you have shot are mine."

"This park and these domains then are yours also. I opine," said the Queen.

"They are."

"And your name?"

"Rookwood, Lord of the Manor of Boughton."

"We have surely heard that name before," said the Queen, turning to Leicester. "You are a papist, I further think?"

"No more than yourself," returned the green man, "Protestant to the backbone, an' it so please ye."

"Was it not one Rookwood we visited in Norfolk, my Lord of Leicester, and narrowly escaped with life from his house?" said the Queen.

"It was, your Majesty, returned Leicester.

"And of whom we have since heard," continued the Queen. "Art thou a relative of that same Rookwood now in exile?"

"His uncle, an' it so further please ye," returned the little man.

"Where dwell you?"

"Here hard by," said Rookwood; "an' it so please ye to visit my poor dwelling, you shall be most welcome."

"Is the mansion far off?"

"Not above a hundred yards from this spot here; you may see its chimneys yonder above the trees."

The Queen looked in the direction he pointed, and saw the curling smoke of several massive chimneys ascending into the clear evening air.

"What say ye, General," she said to Knollys, "methinks I have a disposition to visit the stronghold of this Lord of Boughton here? Prithee, summon our people."

"I pray you to pardon me, good master mine," said the green man, as Sir Francis Knollys was about to put his bugle to his lips. "Her Majesty is right welcome to visit my poor house, as she is to disport herself amongst my deer, but I brook no followers of the male sex."

Again her Majesty looked her surprise.

"When I offer a visit to my subjects," she said, "I choose my own attendants."

"And when I invite a guest to my house, I choose what attendants they shall bring with them. My tower there is mine own, your Majesty may bring these ladies with you an' ye please, but not a male shall enter my dwelling without my especial permission. I have my rules, and your Majesty has yours."

"Fellow," said the Queen, "an' I but speak the word, thou shalt find lodgings in a dungeon in the Tower of London."

"A lodging I should be loth to try the merits of," said the green man, "and one your Majesty will never assign to me."

"Why so, Sir Malapert?"

"Because I am an Englishman, and because your Majesty is the protector, not the oppressor of your subjects; albeit I must still affirm that these deer you have shot are mine."

The Queen would have laughed had she not been getting angry.

"I feel inclined to visit this man's house," she said to Sir Francis, "but I go not unattended. Harkee," she said to the little man, "I cannot visit you without the gentlemen

you see around me, Sir Walter Raleigh, my Lord Leicester, and Sir Francis Knollys."

"Then you visit me not at all," returned Green Coat.

"How, sirrah?" said the Queen, "knowst thou not that I can enforce an entrance?"

"Other monarchs in other days have tried that game, and failed," said Green Coat with another of his solitary chuckles.

"The Yorkists tried to take Rookwood Tower there, what time the Roses fought so fiercely, and they came better equipped than your royal self is this day furnished forth. But come, I see symptoms of foul weather coming on; for once I will break through my rule, your Majesty shall have your way, these three gentlemen and the ladies present

with you shall be welcome to such shelter as my towers afford."

So saying, the little man put his bugle to his lips, and blew a few notes, and almost immediately about a dozen huntsmen or foresters came bounding through the glades, and drew up in attendance. To them the green man gave some brief directions, and then for the first time raising his green hat, offered his hand to the Queen, and led her off towards his house.

"Your Majesty will understand," he said, when they had passed through some thick woods, and emerged upon an open space, on which stood a good-sized stone-built moated edifice, "that I am king in my own domains here, as much as you are queen in your palace of Windsor; excuse, therefore, my

resuming my beaver, as none must be seen greater than myself at Rookwood Tower."

The Queen looked with some curiosity at the little fortalice before her. It was indeed a picture of a place, even for a queen to look at. A small building, but still a tower of great strength; buried in the midst of deep woodlands, its walls going straight down into the deep moat, the drawbridge by which it could alone be entered, being drawn up.

The little man stood for a few moments to observe the Queen's admiration of his tower, and then he blew a faint blast upon his bugle, and the bridge being lowered, he took her hand and led her over it, and so into the interior.

"By my fay," she said as he did so,

"there be places I see in my kingdom which are worthy of observation, and which yet I know not of. This tower of yours, Mr. Rookwood, is a perfect specimen of strength and beauty."

"It was granted by your ancestors to mine for service done at Hastings fight; the Rookwoods of Kent have ever done good service to England's kings since that day. Heaven reward them for it, for I fear, they will get but a poor remuneration elsewhere."

"We understand your taunt," said the Queen, "wrong hath been done one of your name, which it shall be my wish to set to rights."

"If you can."

"If I can?"

"Yes, my nephew hath perished under device and practice."

"Is your relative then dead?"

"So I am informed. By a letter sent me from the town of Sandwich, he was to sail in a ship called the 'Bonaventura,' for the New World. By another letter which I received this morning, it would appear that such ship was wrecked and all on board lost, a fragment being cast upon the shore near that town."

"I am sorry to hear as much."

"So am I, for he was my nearest relative, and next heir," returned Green Coat.

* * * *

Never in all her royal progresses had her royal highness the Queen paid a visit to such a domicile as the one she now was in. On

all other or most other occasions, her royal intent had been signified, and preparations made for her reception. Here there was nothing of the sort ; neither, in good sooth, would there have been had her intentions been signified half a year before she had appointed. As it was, her host was comparatively unprepared, but her Majesty and those few who were permitted to attend her, found no cause of complaint.

The hall of the building, into which she was first shown, was spacious and lighted with large windows on one side by day, by torches and flambeaux by night. Its walls were ornamented with the ponderous arms and armour of the Crusades.

A large oaken table, reaching nearly from end to end, was covered with viands, chiefly

game of all sorts, albeit beef and mutton had also place thereon. An arm-chair of cumbrous workmanship, a sort of demi-throne, stood at the table head, and forms were the only other seats.

The entrance into the interior of the building was by a low door at the end of the hall, but the master of the mansion showed his royal guest no further at first than this hall. The supper, he said, was ready, and leading the Queen to the seat of honour, he placed himself unceremoniously at table also, signified to his other guests to sit down, and helped her Majesty to some of the viands before her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Majesty of England had perhaps never before been so uncereemoniously received and treated. It amused her immensely. It was so natural, so different from the strained efforts and laboured grandeur she had been invariably accustomed to. It seemed quite a relief to her to sit down and eat and drink without a laboured exordium, a welcome in Latin verse, or a flourish of drums and trumpets.

"I will be myself your taster," said Green

Coat, seizing upon the huge pie or pasty before him, and diving into its interior. "Truly you shall find no poison here, unless 'tis introduced by your own followers; nothing unwholesome, but all plain and simple at my table." As he spoke, the host gave a glance at the most successful poisoner of the age. "My Lord of Leicester, my service to you," he said. "Your Highness must honour me by allowing me to be your cup-bearer, too; how like you my wine?"

"We like all we see here, and all you have set before us so well," said the Queen, "that we would fain see more, and spend more time in your house, good Master Boughton. How say you, can we find accommodation for ourself and following for the night?"

"To such as my house affords your Majesty is of course welcome," said her host. "But," and he glanced at the other end of the table.

"You cannot find rooms befitting my Lord of Leicester and your other guests."

"Certes, Madame, you take me at advantage. But I might do that too; rooms befitting 'twere easy to find. Let me see—an apartment for my Lord of Leicester—any dog kennel would do for that hound," he said as if to himself. "An' it were my Lord of Sussex, indeed I might hesitate. These ladies, too; truly my house hath not received guests of the female sex for many years. Sweet creatures," he added, bowing to Elizabeth Throckmorton and Penelope Devereux. "They shall have mine own

apartment, and for the rest—eh, well, we must take such order as the occasion warrants.”

* * * *

That point being so far settled, the Queen was now about to give orders to Leicester to send a messenger to her other followers, when her host again interrupted.

“Again I crave pardon,” he said, “that also must be my task. None leave Bough-ton Tower at this hour but my own people. The moat is never crossed after sun-down save by myself, or by those I give leave to. We have our rules here, your Majesty,” he continued, bowing, “and we must abide by them.”

“So then we are prisoners here in Bough-ton Tower?” said the Queen smiling.

“I said not that, your Majesty,” returned

the Green Man ; - "myself and my people here are all at your service to do your Highness' bidding."

Her Majesty was again amused.

"In that case let a messenger be despatched to signify to my followers that I take up my abode here for the night. Tell them to put on towards Faversham, and tarry there till further orders."

Her Majesty, albeit there was neither masque nor performance of any kind, found plenty to amuse her on this evening, whilst she stayed at the house of her somewhat strange and eccentric host; and the next morning he showed her his sporting hounds, as he termed them, fit to hunt buck, hare, or badger, also hawks of all kinds, long and short winded too.

“My house is not so neatly kept as to shame him who comes in with dirty shoons,” he observed, as he attended her Majesty at breakfast, and again he glanced at Leicester, against whom he evidently had some private pique, “but it is at least inhabited by loyal and honest hearts.”

The Queen reposed in a room hung with tapestry. It was faded and ragged, but represented King David dancing before the Ark on one side, and on the other, the Judgment of Solomon, the executioner in the later piece being a grizzly giant, eight feet high, and seeming to wave his sword as the arras stirred with the wind. On the hearth of the room lay terriers and dogs of all sorts, the chairs even had litters of kittens, and the windows of the room, which

were large, served for places to lay arrows, cross-bows, stone bows, hunting poles, and all sorts of hunting gear. For the sports of the field were with this old Kentish Esquire the whole and entire business of life.

Nay, it did the Queen good to have a good rummage and a good ramble over the rooms of this old bachelor's house, and her maids and herself had many a good hearty laugh at all they found there. Several old green hats, with the crowns thrust in, were filled with partridge and pheasants' eggs. At one end of the room stood strong beer and wine in barrels; on the other side was the door leading into an old chapel, the pulpit seldom wanting a cold chine of beef, with a venison pastie, a gammon of bacon, and a huge apple pie.

In few, her Majesty and her attendant ladies were so much pleased with the oddity of their entertainer, and his domicile, that they remained for two days his guests ; during which time he taught them many things, and gave them several lessons in wood-craft and forest matters.

CHAPTER V.

THE nuptials of my Lord Rich and Penelope Devereux, were anything but propitious. Their "loving voyage" was indeed but for a short time victualled. Poor Sir Philip, jilted and miserable, wrote their dirge as soon as he heard the news.

"Ring out your bells, let mourning shows be spread,
For love is dead."

To that noble, generous, unselfish being,

(albeit himself now married) the news was indeed terrible ; for well he knew the odious disposition of his rival, and how little his great wealth, inherited from a sire as brutal in disposition as himself, was calculated to salve over the miseries of an alliance with one he had loved so tenderly.

“Weep, neighbours, weep, do you not hear it said

That love is dead.

From so ungrateful fancy,

From such a female frenzy,

From them that use men thus,

Good Lord deliver us.”*

* * * * *

When the storm of war came at last, and Sidney saw that the Netherlands was the

* Dirge by Sir Philip Sidney.

part of the world where he could with most honour draw his sword, thither he went. Ere he did so, however, he pardoned his fair enemy, as he termed her; more especially when he discovered that she had been cajoled and almost forced into the hateful nuptials by her own family and friends.

Shakspeare, we have already seen, was the intimate friend of Sidney. In all things he admired and loved him, and it was something to be admired, beloved, and set above other men by Shakspeare. If ever man approached the faultless, it was Philip Sidney. What a man for a woman to lose.

“Take him for all in all,”

She ne’er could even hope

“To look upon his like again.”

And well did Penelope know what she

had lost, and she also knew that her own conduct had lost her such a husband, and gained her such a loss as she now suffered from.

“ If I prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart strings,
I’d whistle her down the wind,
To prey at fortune.”

Such had been Sir Philip’s feelings, and such had been his intent ; nay, he *had* whistled her down the wind, as he *thought*. Men think they can do such things ; and so the “ courtiers scholar’s eye, tongue and sword,” betook himself to the wars, where history tells the further story of the dying soldier’s fame. Apparently it was the big war, the plumed troop, the spirit stirring

drum, the ear piercing fife, and all the quality, pride, and circumstance of glorious war that took him there; but alas, "within, within," 'twas there the spirit wrought."

The Queen might well call him the brightest gem of her court, and refuse to allow Poland to have him for a king. The man was almost too noble, too honest, too unselfish, for the world he mixed with. He sorrowed as he looked upon it, and peradventure he found more solace in the companionship of one only friend, than in anything else the world could bestow upon him.

And so the "poor player," the mighty genius, whose printed page had hardly yet seen the light, was appreciated, and loved by the hero; appreciated and loved by one who

had little but his love and appreciation to bestow.

“ Give me that man,
That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him
In my heart’s core, aye, in my heart of hearts.”

Both Sidney and his father-in-law, Walsingham, had nobly striven to live honestly in the midst of courtly hollowness; both had watched with deep interest, and done their devoir in all things to aid the battle of freedom which was now waging in the Low Countries against Spanish and Flemish thralldom. Both, too, were famous for their generous patronage of learning and literature, and how they both hated the Queen’s suitor, Anjou, Shakspeare* well knew, and

* It is a question whether Shakspeare, had he

Anjou stood for the portrait of the bastard brother of Pedro of Arragon, a man of whom his sister, Margaret of Navarre, said, if fraud and cruelty were banished from the earth, there was in him enough of both to replenish it.

Unlike most other courtiers, Sidney had dared to be independent, and although imbued with all that graceful courtesy and finished

lived in any other age or reign, and fallen amongst other and lesser men than he was associated with, could have penned the dramas he has given to the world. Nay, if England had been shadowed by other forests, and other scenes exhibited on its surface, perhaps we might have wanted something of the lovely touches he has given us. One touch of his wand, perhaps, was excited by one glance of what was before him.

elegance of which he was so capable, he could not condescend to practice the acts of courtier craft. He gave her Majesty his opinion of her intended ; a Frenchman, a papist, son of the Jezebel of the age ; one, too, whose brother had made oblation of his own sister's marriage the cause to make sacrifice of her own brethren in religion.

CHAPTER VI.

IRELAND cost the maiden queen more vexation than she could express. The expense of it pricked her conscience, as she affirmed, and the ill success of the nobles and generals she sent there depressed and wearied her ; whilst the horrible barbarity with which they caused the country to be devastated, is almost unprecedented, save by the exterminations of the Caribs by the Spaniards.

Nay, when the horrors her officers had inflicted there were told her, she declared that in place of shepherds to govern, she had sent wolves to devour the land. "For by my fay," she added, "they have left me only ashes and carcases to reign over."

When Geraldine, and Rookwood, and the pirate were cast ashore, the country had just flamed out into open rebellion. The Desmonds and Eustaces again were in arms against the English Lord Deputy Mountjoy. The venerable Earl of Desmond, crushed by overwhelming numbers, had become a fugitive, and for three years had been wandering, like Prince Charles in after times, in glens and forests, seeking such occasional shelter as he could find in lonely huts and ruined castles.

The false step taken by the Pope during this queen's reign, by making the point of her reign *de jure*, instead of considering it *de facto*, forced her into the measure of insisting that all Ireland should renounce the Catholic religion and become Protestant, and this she enforced under the most severe penal laws.

During such a state of things, when the dwellings and crops of the miserable natives were ravaged and burnt, and their cattle killed wherever the soldiery of the Queen came ; when such a dreadful war of extermination existed, that whole families were known to perform the most dreadful acts of cannibalism, and children were forced even to attempt to devour the dead bodies of their own parents, slaughtered, and left to rot on

their own miserable hearths, it is not to be supposed that Geraldine and Rookwood found a bed of roses.

The wretched turf-built hovel in which they found a shelter, or rather, as soon as they entered, discovered themselves prisoners, was nearly filled with half naked, armed savages; savage in look as in disposition, and whom the very sight of an Englishman was abhorrent. Nay, they would have been murdered on the instant of their capture, with as little ceremony as an American Indian tomahawks and scalps the prisoners of a hostile tribe; but luckily there was an officer of some authority at that moment in the cabin.

The miserable refuge amongst other cabins was situate near the sea-shore, and

on the heights above, some half a mile off in the distance, stood one of those black looking castles, the ruins of which are still to be seen all over that lovely island.

An Ossian-like edifice, looming aloft in the mist, now nearly hidden from sight, and then again, as the vapours rolled past, coming out strong and prominent like a fortress in some fleeting panorama.

During the scene of excitement which was going on around them, it was soon made apparent to Geraldine and Rookwood that their lives hung upon a very slender thread. War in its blackest, most awful form was raging around. The people they were amongst were in open rebellion against England, and any persons from that country cast ashore stood but a poor chance.

A half clothed, half armed kern, who stood in the relation of non-commissioned officer, perhaps, to the semi-barbarous chief of the party in the hut, had orders to care for and protect the shipwrecked till they could be conveyed to the lord of the castle hard by.

“Wouldn’t it be saving of trouble, yer honour, jist to take them out beyanst there, and dale with ’em quietly, the heretic wretches that they are?”

“Not unless you want yer own throat slit next mōment, Dennis,” said the officer. “Sure and have we not the orders of the Desmond himself up beyanst there, that all prisoners are to be seen by himself.”

“But the clothes the wretches have on, methinks, we might get a waif sometime ;

there's three suits there fit for any belted earl to wear."*

"Sure then, the less fit for the likes of you and I, honey. But, come, get an escort under arms, we must to the castle at once, and bring these persons with us. Who knows what yonder man there in the fine hat and feather and the gold laced coat may be?"

"Will the great Desmond see them to-night, think ye?"

"Aye, will he, and strike off their heads to-night, too, an' they give not better account of themselves than they have done here."

* In Elizabeth's day, some of the Irish kings are said to have sat in their halls surrounded by savage retainers half naked.

Accordingly in a very short time after their landing, Geraldine, and her protector Rookwood, and the pirate, were ordered out of the hut and marched up to the dark castle on the hill "beyanst."

The Earl of Desmond, the head of the Fitzgeralds, old as he was, was of a fierce and untameable nature. With a price upon his head, and hunted from rock to glen, and from glen to bog, like some wild beast of prey, he was still unconquered; and albeit at one moment he was necessitated to hide his head in some den or cavern in the woods, at the next he would appear again at the head of his kerns, and keep state and grandeur in some one of his strongholds.

At the present time, like Lear with

diminished followers, and raging under the dangers and difficulties of his situation, with some thousands of infuriated soldiers fell and savage as himself, he occupied a tract of country near the coast.

What a spectacle this king of a county presented at that period! What a picture to behold. Himself, his castle, "the times abuse," and the wild country he sat in state in. The very castle itself was but a ruin through which the moon shone here and there through loophole and window.

The Earl himself, with beard of snow which reached below his girdle, partially clad in heavy armour, the long blade of his crusading ancestors at his back, and reaching from spur to shoulder, sat in state in the great dark hall.

To Geraldine his appearance, and all around and about him, seemed as primitive and singular as if she were looking upon some scene in the early ages of the country.

The wild look of the subordinate chiefs and their followers, some of them ragged kerns, sitting and lying about the lower end of the rude hall. The harper, clad in antique vestments, who touched his instrument and sent forth low, wailing tones which were calculated to soothe the dis-tempered rage of this island king, and to reach even the savagery of his followers, half maddened as they now were with the liquor they quaffed.

It was somewhat unlucky that Geraldine and her companion in adversity were brought

before this old earl-king at a moment when he was distempered with a recent defeat, and from having imbibed rather too freely after the toils of battle and slaughter. The irregular army which he presently commanded had for some little time been victorious, they had fought fiercely amidst their own fastnesses ; but on that day a large force under Fitzeustace had been cut off and destroyed. The Desmond having with difficulty escaped to his present stronghold.

“English, say ye,” said the Earl, as cup in hand, half reclining he was listening to the tones of the harp, whilst a bare legged messenger, a sort of henchman, prostrated himself, and hissed out in under tones the intelligence that three English captives had been taken on the sea-shore.

“English, said ye, and seamen. My curse upon all that come from England.”

The high courage of the Desmond, like that of his countrymen, was tinged with ferocity at this period to an awful extent. A murmur of approbation and delight accordingly ran through that dark hall as the Earl gnashed his teeth and ordered their instant execution.

The castle in which the Earl now held his brief state, was called the Bloody Castle, or the Castle of Blood, from the numerous executions its court-yard had witnessed. Few conquered races have been found inclined to spare, and the carnage, ruin, and desolation which then fell upon the land is to be read even yet in the countenances of its sons, and the hatred with which they still regard the English.

The minor chieftain, whose outpost duty during the night had made him the capturer of Geraldine and her companion in adversity, and who knew by experience that the midnight ferocity of the Desmond was sometimes followed by the morning's reflection and repentance, stepped between his captives and the Earl's wrath. Being in some little favour, and married to a relation of the Earl's, he dared venture to delay.

"Touch the harp again, Morris," he said to the wild looking minstrel. "A gentler touch, man, 'twill bring him back to former scenes in this hall, what time his own daughter stood in jeopardy in these wars. And d'ye hear, Dennis," he added to a subordinate, "bring the captives before him that he may at least judge them ere they die."

Whilst the chieftain spoke, the softened strains of the instrument sounded ; the soul of music shed its influence, and a heavy summons lay like lead upon the stern Earl. When he awoke his eye rested upon the captives.

First his piercing eye looked upon the dark-haired Geraldine, then it ran over the tall and noble form of the English gentleman of a fair race, and then upon the pirate.

“ Who and what are these ? ” he said.

“ The prisoners, mighty Desmond,” said the subordinate with eastern submissiveness.

“ Did I not order them for execution, caitiff ? ” he said, looking fiercely upon the chieftain.

"You did."

"And you disobeyed, son of a wolf, cur. Why did ye so?"

"Because I feared."

"Feared, wretch! If I told ye to nail them alive by their tongues to the outward walls, 'twas your duty to obey."

"Doubtless, mighty Desmond; but —"

"But what?"

"One moment, only one," said the chieftain, approaching and whispering a few words in the Earl's ear.

"A woman, say ye!" exclaimed the Earl in surprise. "What this seeming ship-boy?"

"That same."

The Desmond hesitated; he again looked steadily at Geraldine.

"And is it not a woman, too, who hath pursued me and mine, an English woman? Accursed be the hour in which she ascended the English throne."

Again he looked at Geraldine. Her dark hair and cheeks of cream seemed to impress him in her favour.

"Are ye really English born?" he said.

"Half Irish," returned Geraldine. "My mother was a Fitzgerald."

"A Fitzgerald, eh!" said the Desmond with some surprise. "Well that has saved thee for to-night at least. And you?"

"English on both sides," replied Rookwood.

"And a Protestant, a heretic?"

"No; a Catholic."

"Then you, too, shall have time to pre-

pare. To-morrow you die. And now for you," continued the Earl, pointing to the pirate. "What are you?"

"Your prisoner; a nameless man, unfit to live or die; yet equal to either fortune."

"Ah," said the Earl, "then take the worst I can give; death by the hangman's cord."

"Still, perhaps, you will grant me so much favour," said the pirate, "as you have granted to these my companions in adversity."

"If you ask it. But methought you seemed but now indifferent as to your fate."

"I am so," said the pirate. "And yet somehow, I have taken a fancy to die

with these my co-mates and brothers in adversity."

"So be it, then," said the Desmond, turning and once more resuming his listless attitude. "One thing, mind ye, die you must; and that at sun rise; so make the best use of your time whilst you may."

Crouching down upon the hearth, her head buried in her hands, watching the ashes of the half expired peat fire, was a female of middle age. In youth she might have been beautiful; but toil, deep-seated care, and remembrance of all she had witnessed and partaken of during her country's wars, had left her even in middle age a shrivelled, weird, and desperate-looking creature. But weird and haggard as she was, and apparently locked up in her

own wretched thoughts, so as to be inattentive to all around, that female so lone in the hall, and amidst so savage a throng, was an object of deep reverence and fear to most of the assemblage there. She was indeed a near relative, a daughter of the Desmond's, and regarded by him and all there as a sort of sybil, who could read the fates, and even control events.

When Geraldine Maynard spoke, the music of her voice seemed to strike upon the ear of this singular looking female. Gradually and slowly her head turned to the sound, until she found herself almost unconsciously gazing upon the features of the speaker. Then she rose, and scarcely observed by the assemblage, glided round behind the Desmond's chair, and stood and

regarded Geraldine for some moments. Nay, her eye traversed over the young girl's form, rapidly and searchingly as the lightning's flash, and then a curl of contempt seemed to pass over her own features, and she drew the hood of her garment over her dark elf locks.

"A Fitzgerald, eh?" she said, drawing back a pace or two, and still regarding Geraldine. "Strange that the wolf's cub should herd with the English hound. She has the expression and look of the Fitzgeralds, too."

As she said this, the dark lady slowly returned to her former place, still as she did so, however, bending an eye upon the gentle Geraldine, a look she kept upon her all the time she stood in that hall, and when they

left it by the Earl's order, she rose and followed.

It was lucky for the prisoners, especially so for Geraldine, that this lady had suddenly taken an interest in the latter, for when they were removed from the hall, they were conveyed to a small dungeon in a lower part of the castle, one of the many underground prisons in which captives were confined.

Hardly had the prisoners been conveyed into the dark cell, and the massive door closed upon them, when its huge lock revolved, and the dark lady entered, accompanied by a couple of men-at-arms, one of whom bore a torch in his hand.

Advancing to Geraldine as the flame of the torch fell upon her.

"You are not fitly lodged here," she said, "be you who and what you may. The Desmond is hunted like a wolf from glen to mountain, yet still those of the female sex should ever find fitting sympathy, be they Irish or English. Enough, follow me, I have power and influence here, which although it may not suffice to save life, will still serve to shield you from some of the miseries of this devoted land."

"And my companions?" said Geraldine, "methinks I could hardly bear to leave them in this dreadful dungeon, whilst I availed myself of your kindness."

The dark lady again steadily regarded Geraldine, and then turned her eye upon Rookwood. "What are these companions of thine?" she said; "are they common

sailors? No," she said, answering her own query, as she took the torch and held it first to the face of Rookwood, and then gave a slighter glance at the pirate. "No, this is a man of gentle look and gentle expression; I will care for him too. And this, aye this is one better born than his clothes bespeak him, and yet one who hath done evil in his way of life. Come, be content," she said, "follow me all, you shall have a fitter lodging till the axe or cord settle all your worldly accounts."

"Care nothing for me, lady," said the pirate, "I am, as you say, one whose life hath been given to evil courses; this dungeon will serve my turn for the few hours I have to live."

"Repentance is a virtue, Sir," said the

lady; "I go not from my word. See that these men are better lodged and cared for," she added to the principal attendant. "You will follow me," she added to Geraldine as she turned to leave the dungeon.

"And for the Desmond, lady, you will hold us harmless of his wrath?" said the official.

"Fear you not for that," returned the lady; and then taking the hand of Geraldine, she led her up some winding steps, and so into a chamber in another wing of the castle.

CHAPTER VII.

"You must have but a poor opinion of our hospitality from all you have seen," said the dark lady, setting the torch she carried in a sort of stand, and signing to Geraldine to be seated. "But I may perhaps still say that circumstances and persecution hath made us as we are, and that in truth we have seen in former and happier days some nurture. You said you were half Irish

and a Fitzgerald, say how is that? I need hardly say that any, the most unpractised eye can penetrate into the disguise you have assumed; such a form is not easily disguised; you are a female. Before we associate further, tell me at once for what reason the habit you wear was assumed?"

"For no ill purpose, lady," said Geraldine, "the circumstances of the hour of peril in which I was placed when an enforced passenger on board the ship wrecked upon your coast, was my warranty for such a step."

"Enough, I believe you; falsehood and guile never spoke word between those lips. Tell your story or not as you list; suffice it, I cannot withhold the interest I feel in you;

a something, a secret sympathy seems to draw me towards you. I might now be looking on a daughter about your age, had not mishap and misfortune dogged my heels almost ever since such child was born. I sent the child to England, so that it might escape being slaughtered on my own hearthstone. Yes," continued the lady, "my life has indeed been one scene of horror and despair, not alone wrought by the enemies of my house, but even by my own kith and kin. Harkee, girl," she added, seating herself on a low seat or settle, "I am the only child, the daughter of the fierce man you saw in yonder hall, the old Earl of Desmond. I married beneath my station, at least so my own friends thought. I married an English soldier of fortune, who was stabbed to death

in my own house, stabbed by one who should have been his protector."

The dark lady, as she was termed by her adherents, became lost in her own sad remembrances after this revelation of her grief. "Winters of memory" seemed to roll over her. At length she rose, walked to the window of the room, and gazed upon the scene without. On the vast ocean, and the rock-bound coast on either hand, and then again she turned, seated herself, and once more regarded Geraldine.

"We are a peculiar race, we Irish," she said, taking the hand of Geraldine in her own. "Hatred, revenge, and all evil purposes, I firmly believe, predominate amongst us. Pride, too, the devil's sin, pride is our bane. Alas! alas! the seeds of repentance

are sown in our youth, girl, by pleasure, but the harvest, the harvest is reaped in age by pain. You, too, were sent from this country, you say?"

"I was conveyed to England by a faithful servant of my mother's," said Geraldine, "sent there during a time of turmoil and destruction; saved, as I have heard, from amidst the burning ruins of some place besieged."

The dark lady seemed to be strangely moved.

"What was the name of that servant?" she inquired.

"Macdermot, a follower of the Fitzgerald family, an old man, who died soon after he had discharged his trust."

The dark lady rose from her seat, took

the torch from the stand where she had placed it on entering the chamber, and gazed for a few moments upon Geraldine. Again she seemed to peruse her form inch by inch.

"The name of that uncle to whom you were conveyed in England?" she at length said.

"Maynard."

"Glory to heaven! 'tis as I thought from the first. Your name, you say, is Geraldine Maynard?"

"It is."

"And you know but little of your parentage by the mother's side?"

"Nothing more than I have told you."

"Know your mother then here," she said. "Your father was that Maynard, an

officer in the royal service, who married Geraldine Fitzgerald, the daughter of the Earl of Desmond. The Desmonds are proud, they never forgave him. My husband was the victim of their hatred to all Englishmen. My child escaped the general slaughter, and I sent her to England to some friends I had heard she possessed there. 'Twas my only means of saving her life. You are that child," added the lady, clasping Geraldine in her arms.

Geraldine, who had surmised what was to come from all that had gone before, was not so much surprised as she otherwise would have been, wept in her mother's embrace, and was for a time overcome by her feelings.

"Hark," said the lady after a pause, and

as she still gazed upon the beautiful features of her long lost daughter; "Hark, that sound reminds me of your peril here. It is the wailing cry of the banshee."

Geraldine turned to the window and listened, as a long drawn wailing cry sounded without.

"Alas! alas! 'tis ever thus; 'tis we ourselves who are our own worst enemies, that sound proclaims some great misfortune in store. And you, too, I had almost forgotten that you and your companions must die at dawn."

"Will the Earl of Desmond execute his own relative?"

"Most assuredly. He has sworn a deep oath to execute all the English who fall into his hands. Still, I must try and save you.

I must convey you myself from this place to one of the huts on the sea-shore."

"But my companions in adversity," urged Geraldine, "how will it fare with them?"

"They must take their chance here," said the dark lady.

"I could not consent to leave this place without them. If you possess any power, save all or none."

"What are they to you?" inquired the lady.

"One has long been a faithful friend, a protector, without whose aidance you would not have seen me here alive."

"A lover, eh?"

"No, a friend."

"And the other?"

"Only associated with us in our adversity ; nay, I believe I might have accounted him amongst my foes, had all gone as my enemies hoped."

"Yet him you would save too?"

"I would."

"Brave, honest heart, dear daughter of a brave sire. How much I honour thee, even from the little I have known of thee. Come then, I will save all, an' if I can do so."

As the dark lady spoke, she rose and summoned one of her attendants.

"All sleep, Murtogh?" she said.

"All, lady, save the guard."

"Enough. We must leave this at once. You must again attend me to the dungeons."

* * * *

As Geraldine steadily refused to accept of aid without her two companions were included in the chance, the dark lady consented to take them with her.

It was dark when they reached the hut she had fixed upon for their refuge until she could safely get them away to England, which was her intent.

Nay, if she meant to save even her own life she had not departed from the castle a minute too soon; for ere dawn a large force of the enemy, under command of Kelly of Moriarty, suddenly appearing, stormed the Desmond in his stronghold, and put almost all there to the sword. The Earl himself and one or two of his followers only escaping with the greatest difficulty.

Moriarty gave the castle to the flames. He was the deadly foe of the Fitzgeralds, and had a long account of injuries given and received on his red hands.

He followed the Earl in his flight, and single handed rushed into the cottage where he had taken refuge, and springing upon him pierced him to the heart, and then struck off his head.*

* Kelly of Moriarty sent the Desmond's head as an acceptable present to Elizabeth during the "hag's wars," and it long graced the towers of London Bridge.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE latter days of Elizabeth were embittered and improvished by the long strife of her officials in Ireland; and if her sister said that "when dead, Calais would be found written upon her heart," she might, with as much reason, have affirmed that Irish cares had tormented and crushed her latter days.

Who shall venture to describe the terrible

animosity which raged in that land, as they fought on part and part, son against sire, and sire against son, and nearest kindred ?

The Desmond, singularly enough, had rushed in his extremity into the cottage to to which the dark lady had conveyed the fugitives. He saw, and understood that they had eluded his grasp, and forgot his own danger in his hot desire for revenge. He would have immolated them with his own hand, but Kelly being close upon his track, rushed upon and struck him down as we have said.

The next moment all in the hut had exchanged hands, and were the prisoners of the Desmond's deadly foe.

"Who and what are these?" said Kelly,

taking off his plumed helm as several of his soldiers now filled the hut.

"Prisoners of the Desmond's."

"Prisoners?" returned Kelly, gazing upon Geraldine.

"Yes; subjects of the Queen of England."

"How came they here?"

"Wrecked on the coast."

"Then we will send them back to England. And this," he said, kicking the severed head of his foe which lay on the cottage floor, "let this, too, be taken to the Queen; for three years have I hunted him down. 'Twill be a fitting gift for her."

* * * *

Our fugitives saw the last of the Irish coast as the rude galleys they were in swept

onwards. The dark lady as she saw her native shores recede from her sight sighed ; but, truth to say, now she had recovered her daughter, the separation from those rocky heights was not so terrible as it otherwise would have been.

The horrors she had witnessed in “the Hag’s wars” had made her long for some secure refuge. She had been at times an enforced follower of her fierce sire, because no other refuge was open to her, no shelter but his “following.” And again, she had found the means at times of softening the horrors of those wars, and saving life and limb.*

* During the Hags’ wars in Ireland, besides every species of misery, famine so clung to the land that children were found lying on the hearths, having died

And so with the decapitated head of the Desmond, and several other captives, together with some English troops returning home, they sadly sailed for England.

whilst devouring the remains of their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR scene now, therefore, necessarily shifts to that island; and our readers are again invited to visit Barnes Common. Old Maynard is still there, still hale and hearty as if of yore; but his jocund laugh has gone, or is fined down to a sort of inward chuckle whenever any thing especially moves his spirit to laugh. Seldom he smiles now, for he cannot away with the trouble that some time back fell upon him.

He never had a daughter, and how dear Geraldine was to him we have already seen. Another thing annoyed him ; there was not a little scandal amongst the " hempen home-spuns " who lived near. Respected as he was, still such is the love of detraction that some of his most intimate acquaintances scrupled not to whisper that Geraldine Maynard was a little shrew, and that she had gone off in most unseemly guise with one Rookwood, a banished traitor ; and such was indeed the cause of the old man's sorrow. Not the loss of the girl, but her shame.

" Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny."

So said his friend ; and indeed that friend, deeply as he felt Geraldine's loss,

did all he could to reconcile and carry balm to the old man's heart. But what could not Will Shakspeare do? What could equal the charm, the fascination of his voice, his manner, and his goodness.

We who know him only by his works, his "sermons in stones," his "good in everything," we who read and see himself in his pictured images, we who know him but in the reflection of his christian goodness and his teaching, can see him in our houses, in our rooms, in our very presence, never to be obliterated. We speak his words in converse for the hundredth time each day we live; and ever as we speak them we again pause, wonder, and glorify our own memory that can extemporize but a stanza he has written.

Will Shakspeare was a sorrowful man on his return to Barnes. He brought sad intelligence, and sadly it was received; he had to comfort, and to soothe, but at first it was not in him. He had himself lost so dear a friend that that loss seemed to sever, to sear up every joy to come. To him the world was nothing.

“The covering sky was nothing,
England nothing.”

Such at first was his feeling and his sorrow; for the man was one to appreciate such a woman, although found too late—to feel that her loss was “loss of all.”

Old dame Maynard was of an easier disposition than her husband. Women of her sort generally are so. They feel

staggered at first, but indulgence in a good flood of tears washes out a good deal of their sorrow. The o'erwrought heart is relieved.

“ Ah! Master Shakspeare, this is indeed sad news you bring us. My poor dear Geraldine! To think that she should have been the victim of these villains, and then drowned at last. Ah, deare me! when I first saw ye both together, and how she took to you, and seemed to devour all you said, and hung so upon your words, I did think then that I should have one day seen you man and wife.”

“ What’s this? what’s this you’re saying, dame?” exclaimed old Maynard; “ art mad? art gone stark demented? man and wife, eh? Why our friend is wived already.”

"Well I declare, and so I recollect now to have heard," said the dame.

"Aye, and a precious she-devil, curst as a witch they do say she is, too," muttered old Maynard to himself, as he turned to go to the mill. "Come, my friend, let's e'en take a turn ere supper time. You stay with us to-night, eh?"

* * * *

Some weeks passed away after the Miller and his family had been made acquainted with the ill tidings of the 'Bonaventura' and all the other matters appertaining; and winter again approached, so that the ingle neuk and the warm log on the hearth were again in requisition.

Master Shakspeare, as we have seen, loved the honest Miller, and still ofttimes in

his short journeys to Richmond, Datchet, and old Windsor, paid him a passing visit.

His sleeping room, which looked into the little garden in rear, was rather a favourite, especially so, as it had been the bed-chamber of Geraldine, and there he found such of his works as were then to *be* found. Few enough, but Geraldine had noted down many passages she had heard in his plays, and even much of his conversation when at their table; all which he found she had written in her tablet book.

Shakspeare was again a guest at the Miller's, and again the season was sharp and severe. The old man sat in his old accustomed seat with no other visitor, merely himself, his old dame, and the one guest; both sons were now away from home,

Hodge had gone to the Low Country wars. The hour was late, the supper o'er, and they were about to retire for the night when a footstep was heard without, as quiet and stealthy as on a former occasion. The serving wench opened the door, and a stranger in a long seaman's cloak entered. He took a few paces, and then he knelt down upon one knee, and performed rapidly the sign of the cross.

"All hallowed be this house," he said
"and a blessing upon all in it!"

Then he rose, approached the table, doffed his castor, and stood confessed.

The Miller stood transfixed, his eyes staring, his mouth open.

"ROOKWOOD!" exclaimed Shakspeare starting up.

'Twas even so. They had thought him dead, wrecked in the salt seas, drowned with the gentle Geraldine.

"Geraldine is not dead," said Shakspeare, "your own escape gives warrant to that hope."

"Speak, man alive, speak," said Maynard, seizing Rookwood by the arm till he shrunk from his iron gripe, "the truth—is she alive?"

"She is alive and well," returned Rookwood.

"Where is she?" cried old Maynard."

"Not very far off, good Master Maynard," returned Rookwood.

"Why comes she not herself?" said the old man. "She must be ill. I will go to her quickly; lead the way, man."

"Patience, my good friend," said Shakspeare, who was himself equally excited. "Let us hear more."

"She is ill, I tell ye," cried the excited Miller; "let me go to her. Who knows, she may be dying, and we shall find her but to lose her again."

"My own dear uncle," said a voice as a woman cloaked and hooded stepped in, followed by two others, a male and female. "My own dear uncle, I did but tarry that the surprise might not be too much. Your own Geraldine has returned at last."

The Miller ran to her, put his hands upon her shoulders, thrust her back, looked at her, and then clasped her in his arms, where he held her whilst his huge hulk heaved with emotion, and he sobbed like a child.

As soon as Geraldine could extricate herself from his embrace, she returned his caress by a kiss on either cheek, and then she flew to her aunt's arms.

Shakspeare had drawn back, he wished not to interrupt the joy of the meeting.

Geraldine brought the two persons who had followed her, and introduced them as the companions of her escape. One was a stately and superior looking woman, as all who looked at her saw in a moment. She bent her head and took the Miller's hand ; the second was the pirate ; then she turned to Rookwood.

"I must have a welcome from all here, uncle," said Geraldine ; "and from none more than your old guest. But for him you would never again have seen your Geraldine here in life and safety."

"The Heavens rain blessings on his head for all that he hath done," said the Miller. "God reward him for it, for I cannot."

As Shakspeare now saw that all were mixing up together he stepped forward, and Geraldine sprung towards him.

"My friend, my preserver!" she said seizing his hand, "for without your perseverance and aid I must have been lost. Now I am indeed happy. I should have felt that my greatest joy was wanting had we wanted you here."

Shakspeare looked somewhat confused; but he carried her hand to his lips and kissed it.

So after more greetings, and more explanations, the old dame once more "her face o' fire with exertion," spread the table;

the Miller broached his best ale cask, and set wines of various sorts before them ; and so "'twas supper time again."

CHAPTER X.

CERTES that was apparently a happy party! The lost one was restored, and the entire circle were bent to offer up their thanks to the Great Giver of all good for His mercy towards them.

But were all these happy? that is the question. Perhaps not so happy as they seemed.

Rookwood loved Geraldine as his own

soul, how could he help it? but never so much, much as she owed to him, as even "a scattered smile" had she ever bestowed upon him by way of encouragement. He looked and saw plainly now how matters were; but one glance of affectionate, yet modest, regard, such as she regarded the poet with, would have rewarded him for all his care.

* * * *

After the meal was over they drew round the hearth, and told the story of their lives since last they had met there; and so the mystery of Geraldine's disappearance, and how her persecutors had managed to elude discovery from time to time, and how carefully the two faithful friends had followed upon the track both of Lord Rich and the

miscreant who had deceived his employer in the hope of gaining his own ends ; all was dilated on and commented upon till the dawn shone in the casement, and the frosted trees in the garden glittered in all their beauty, and one of those clear beautiful days, which are, sooth to say, somewhat scarce in this island of ours, seemed promised.

“Strange matters, these,” said old Maynard, “my masters all. But how about that caitiff wretch, that worser servitor of a bad lord, what hath become of him ? Fore me ! but I have a long and heavy account to settle there. You laid the villain by the heels in Sandwich jail, you say, Master Shakspeare, eh ?”

“I did so,” returned the poet. “Never-

theless I can hardly tell anything further regarding him; having no wish to pursue the fellow further when all seemed lost, I failed to appear against him, so he was liberated and went on his way, I conclude."

"You were too lenient to the hang-dog, the hard-hearted villain, good Master Shakspeare. Would I might but light on him once more, 'twould be bad for one or both, I can tell you. And this stately lady, too," continued the old man, regarding the dark lady, who was conversing apart with her new found child, "so grand, and so sad looking, my brother's wife, eh? and mother of our Geraldine. Faith, I can hardly believe it all. Wonders do abound! Eh, Geraldine, lass, I can but wonder at it all."

“Nay; but, uncle, you know how report always spoke so highly of my poor father in those terrible wars, and that when a soldier was the theme, his name was always first.”

“Well, lass, I did so. But you know he grew ashamed of all here; we heard not from him, but only of him; and what chieftain’s daughter he had wedded, and how he died we never knew till now. The wild looking old man who brought you on that night, a baby snatched from blazing ruins and death, told us nothing, absolutely nothing. ‘Take this child,’ he said, ‘your brother’s child. Ask no questions regarding her, for should her kindred hear that she has escaped from Ireland they will reach her, even here.’”

"Yet was she the lawful daughter of a noble soldier?" said the dark lady sadly.

"Ah! but then her uncle was but a miller, eh? Grant me that much, and all is accounted for."

"I may not deny it; such was the pride of the Desmonds that they could not get over that alliance."

"Where are they now?" said Maynard, who could not forbear a slight touch of retaliation. "The Earl's head, they do say, is stuck up with other Irish traitors on London Bridge."

"Say not traitors," said the dark lady; "rather say unfortunates. My father, with proper usage, would have been a more loyal subject to England's Queen than the traitors who so cruelly have used him."

"By the Lord Harry, and I do believe that, too," said Maynard. "I pray you pardon me," he added, taking her hand, "but you must confess he was a fierce man, too, that sire of yours. . And so you all managed to get clear o' the vessel, eh, Master Rookwood, without question?"

"We did," said Rookwood. "I rounded a story of our being wrecked on the Irish coast; and so we were suffered to depart."

With the exception of the pirate, who Rookwood had taken so much interest in on gathering some hints of his story as to wish to befriend, as he had reclaimed him by his counsel and advice; except this man, who departed for town at dawn, the entire party consented to accept of old Maynard's hospitality; and, accordingly all

that a well-to-do old English yeoman could do to treat his guests well, was done.

The dark lady, whose disposition was soured under the yoke of so many sorrows and the scenes she could not forget, spent much of her time in the seclusion of her own chamber, where Geraldine constantly attended her, she was astonished at all she saw. "It gave her wonder, great as her content," to observe the peaceful comfort an old English hearth displayed.

"And so we might be, too, dear Geraldine," she said one evening as her daughter sat at her feet and listened to a description of other days, "and so we Irish might be, too, if our evil passions did not reign so fiercely in our own breasts."

"You are determined to pursue your

original intent then, dearest mother. My entreaties to stay out the rest of your days with us here are then vain."

"They are, dearest. I shall at once enter a convent, where the lady superior is a relation of mine own, and so take leave of a world in which I have suffered so much."

"And of me your daughter, too?"

"That will be hard," said the rigid Catholic. "But in life we must have our trials."

"You have had your share, methinks, and endeavoured to do your duty too."

"True: the question now is what those duties now are? And yet I think I know mine, dearest.

"*'To be for aye in shadowy cloister mew'd
To chaunt faint praises to the cold fruitless moon.'*"

"Hush! I must not hear you speak thus. My greatest grief is still that you are of that opinion; would that you would change to mine."

"Never, mother, never. Harkee, I am sorry, but I can see much in regard to religion. We can fight for it, wrangle for it, commit all sorts of horrors in its name, even die for it; anything but live for it."

"You speak truth; but say no more. I must do as I said. Next week, with Heaven's blessing, I depart for my last refuge."

"Alas! then, we meet but to part again."

"We have all our several paths, and our sterner duties. You will be happy,

dearest, I trust. You will marry this gentleman, our friend."

"Who?"

"Need you ask me?"

"If I am to reply."

"This Master Rookwood."

Geraldine seemed annoyed.

"Most assuredly I shall not do so, good mother," she replied.

"Nay, but I thought that some such passages had passed between you, as might lead to your returning the love he bears you."

"He bears me no love, I hope, beyond what his estimate of my endeavours to serve him has engendered."

"He will now be restored to his estates. I learn that the Queen hath at last pardoned him."

“That would be his least recommendation. I will not but say that the gentleman is of good birth and hath good gifts, better than I ought ever to aspire to. But no, dear mother, I can never marry him. Nay, I think that I have fully made up my mind never to marry at all.”

The dark lady looked at Geraldine in some surprise, but said no more at that time.

CHAPTER XI.

VERY many of the neighbours had tried to give the cold shoulder to old Maynard and his niece, since her return. The old scandal was revived, intensified, and magnified.

Sharp was the envy of the village lasses, for they remembered how they had been cut out in former days. The old revels were coming round again, and they determined that she should never again queen it over

them, and enchain all hearts as she had done.

They need hardly have troubled themselves; Geraldine never again meant to dance upon that green sward, and join in their sports again. No; her spirit was saddened by all she had seen and suffered. Nay, she treated all the coldness and alteration of manner displayed by her old acquaintances with the most profound, the most withering contempt. She still walked a queen there—she was a queen there—A queen of beauty!

Presently it began to be rumoured that a great lady, an earl's sister, a stately dame, still beautiful, but a recluse, was a guest at old Maynard's cottage; and then it began to leak out some way or other that

this great lady had a story attached to her, that she had been the wife of the young soldier who had gone from amongst them years ago, and risen to high command in the Low Countries, and had then married some great lady, and that Geraldine was the offspring of that marriage; and then it came to be known;—for your village gossip seldom fails to ferret out and “delve to the very root,” that this lady was no other than the sister of the great Desmond, the rebel Earl, whose shaggy head men were just now staring at as it grinned upon the gate-house on the town side of London Bridge; and then nothing could exceed their attentions and their desire to make up for past rudenesses and admittance to the circle

Paltry companions as they were, the circle was self-content and self-contained, it wanted no augmentation, it would endure no augmentation. It was as happy a circle as winter's tedious nights ever assembled around a log, or as the clear winter's sun, and fresh frosty air invited to a ramble in the sweet woodlands, or a brisk walk upon the pleasant Common without.

Sweet was the converse and right pleasant were the hours passed from morning till night, from night till morning during the week the party remained together, and whilst our Shakspeare was the guest.

CHAPTER XII.

THE poet was an early riser, but not quite so early a bird as the Miller, who was generally up and out and about before anyone was astir.

His chamber window looked forth across the meadow. He loved to look upon the old dark mill wheel in the stream, and the quaint old mill house, too. Ofttimes in summer had he leant from that casement and listened to the pulsatory beat of the

old lichen covered wheel and the splash of the water, and also upon the willow which grew ascaunt the brook and "shewed its hoar leaves in the glassy stream." Now, however, the wheel was frozen in that stream.

On the morn of the day on which the party was to separate, the poet rose from his bed, donned his clothes, and ere he descended, opened his window and looked forth.

The morning was dark and rather lowering. Presently a man advanced from the other side of the house, and placed himself beneath the window. There was something suspicious in his look. He glanced around, and then posted himself where he thought he was concealed, amongst some thick shrubs and evergreens which grew there.

Shakspere observed that he had a cross-bow in his hand. The dawn was but just breaking. Presently a couple of men joined this man where he stood. Shakspere overheard a portion of their converse ; it evidently related to Geraldine and to the other inmates of the house. It was a time of unscrupulous deeds. The matter seemed strange.

"The old dotard is already astir," one of the men said. "The girl sleeps somewhere below."

"I'll shoot the old 'un as he leaves the mill," said the first comer. "I've an old account to settle with him."

The poet knew it was customary with old Maynard to visit his mill at daybreak before anyone was up. Here was evidently

a dark plot in agitation. Without disturbing the conspirators, who were about to move off, he leant out and observed them more closely, and found that the man he had first observed was no other than his old adversary Pierce Corbelt. Then he could more easily understand the design in hand. It was to shoot the old Miller, and to make another attempt to get hold of Geraldine.

To throw on his doublet, and seize his rapier, was but the work of a few moments. He then sought Rookwood, roused him, told him all in few words. Rookwood was soon equipped, and together they left the house, securing the door behind them.

Shakspeare was incapable of hating any man without sufficient cause; this fellow he had long wished to grapple with.

Desiring Rookwood to remain on guard near the house, he took his way towards the mill.

The trio evidently did not expect to be interrupted. They were in search of the old Miller, and Shakspeare came up just as they had reached the copse of alders near the stream.

"The tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide" showed itself in an instant as he approached Corbelt.

He drew his rapier and turned upon him so suddenly that the villain was startled, and drew back several paces.

"Yield thee, thief and murderer," he said ;
"yield, lest I slay you where you stand."

Corbelt was over-awed—cowed, almost paralyzed at the aspect of the poet ; he called

to his companions and stood upon the defensive, at the same time attempting to level his cross-bow.

Shakspeare was too wary to allow of that. He thrust in upon him, made a double feint, and pinned him by the right shoulder in a moment. He would have improved the first thrust, and ran him through, but his companions now struck in to his assistance.

Luckily for the poet, old Maynard now heard the scuffle ; he threw open the window of the little room where he usually kept his books, and looked out.

“Hollo ! hallo !” he cried, “what gear is this ? ah, I see ; hold on fast, good Will, hold on till I come down.”

So saying, Master Maynard pushed his

THE ABDUCTION.

They sprang out of the window, stepped upon a wooden framework which constituted the roof of the great vessel, clambered over it, and in a few moments a hand took part in the operation.

The first man drew the sword of the second, and the second came upon the first with a violent force.

At the same time, too, who had heard of the result of the encounter, now came forward to assist the ruffians.

It was then that Blaynard, been so long so outraged, as by the perseverance

of the same, as several
of the crew, and to

whom he addressed himself. "By're lady, mates, I'll have my own way with these villains this time, an' I swing for it. Here, lads, take your poles and break me in the ice round about my mill wheel. 'Fore heaven, I'll teach them to come after my niece again."

The Miller's men were as willing to obey as their master to direct; they went to work with a will, broke a good portion of the ice near the mill wheel, and without more ado seized upon Corbelt and his comrades, and dragged them to the bank.

"In with the scum," roared the Miller, "in with the caitiffs. A cold bath this morning will do them good."

No sooner said than done; the Miller's men, spite of cries and entreaties, threw

in Corbelt first, and then his two comrades after him.

"An' it be deep as hell," said the Miller, "down they shall go. Again, my mates, thrust 'em down again," he cried, as the struggling wretches tried to evade the millers' poles, and to gain the bank gasping and aghast.

"'Fore gad, it's lucky my wheel there is fixed fast in the ice, or ecod, I'd grind ye up, ye villains. Push 'em in again, mates; body 'o me," he roared, "will nothing serve your turn but my niece?"

In short, it was as much as Shakspeare and Rookwood could do to save the lives of the wretched Corbelt and his myrmidons; and when at last old Maynard allowed them to be assisted from the water,

he ordered his men to take them off, dripping as they were, to the head constable at Barnes, to be further dealt with as he might think proper.

"And now to breakfast with what appetites we may," he said, giving a knowing look to Shakspeare.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a gloomy day without, and it was a gloomy day within. Save and excepting the small episode of the ducking of the three caitiffs in the mill stream, the which had caused no little satisfaction and delight to the Miller, and some hilarity to all, there seemed a degree of care over the whole household.

The dark lady was to set off on that very

day for the convent; Master Rookwood, whose affairs, as he said, took him across the seas, had offered to be her escort. Then Master Shakspeare had to be present at a rehearsal of the piece he had been ordered to write. This play her Majesty had ordered for representation on that day week, and the poet had engaged to put the parts in the hands of the actors of the Blackfriars, to give them his own impressions of the characters, and to see to all and sundry.

The parting between Geraldine and her mother was a sad one. They would not perhaps see each other again, save through the bars of a convent grating.

Rookwood stood up to say farewell, but the words stuck in his throat. There was that within which passeth show, which none

there but himself knew of or suspected, his deep all absorbing love.

Rookwood's was unrequited love ; for well he knew that Geraldine would have rewarded him with kingdoms, and left herself a beggar if she could, but love him she could not. He was not the man for her fancy ; a fine noble creature, brave, generous, devoted, but he wanted something in her eyes. He had no mind she thought.

"Farewell," at length articulated Rookwood, "you will not forget one who has tried to do his devoir in the service of the loveliest of her sex?"

"Forget, how should I forget?" said Geraldine. "But you will be back so soon I trust, we shall hardly have time to miss you."

"You will hardly miss me, that I dare to say," replied Rookwood; "but when, if I ever come back at all is quite a question."

"How?"

"I am going to join the Queen's forces in the Low Countries," said Rookwood.

"In the Low Countries?" said Geraldine, "you are not going to those horrid wars? Why did you not tell us this before?"

"I hardly thought you would care to hear as much," said Rookwood.

"And when did you make up your mind to this?" inquired Geraldine.

"Not so very long ago."

"Then change it and stay with us here."

"It may not be, I have made up my

mind to join Sidney, and fight under his banner, because I love the man."

"Then you will not even take possession of your estates, now they have been restored to you."

"I will not. Possessions, position, all are now as nothing to me. I am a soldier, lady, and bound as I told you, for the Low Countries. Farewell, once more, perhaps for ever."

He stood for a moment, then turned to go, but could not move. The tears coursed one another down his cheek. He put back his hand, for he could not turn his face to look again, and then the trees closed over him, as he dashed away through the shrubbery, and Geraldine stood like one bewildered and almost choked with the sobs

that rose in her throat. She had learnt his secret, and he was gone, as he said, perhaps for ever.

* * * *

Master Shakspeare had for some time shown "a truant disposition." His old haunts in Chepe and on the Bankside, and before and behind the curtain had long wanted his presence.

"I think he is transformed into a beast,
For I can nowhere find him like a man,"

said burly old Jack Brandon, who had played some of his best characters. A rollicking blade, and right merrie, conceited withal, was Jack, a mighty favourite of the poet's.

The player had missed the author for some time, and in his coarse way was

thus speaking of him at the tavern, and all at once there stood his friend Shakspeare at his elbow.

“How now, Jack, what mutter ye?” said the poet; “but come, I do confess my fault. I have indeed been long a truant. But now I am come to rouse you up, to give you something new; parts for you all; and indeed my lads all, you must bestir yourselves and becudgel your brains, for we must e’en play out this new play before her Majesty in less than a week.”

“Gad a mercy, I am but slow at study. Will,” said Jack, “thou art surely ill advised in this.”

“Not a whit; not a whit. There is not a single part in the piece that is not written and adapted to your several capacities.”

"Where lies your scene?" inquired Tarleton.

"At old Windsor and its neighbourhood."

"Who plays the principal character?" said Jack Brandon.

"Yourself."

"What, me?"

"Yes."

"What is the part, anything in the Sir Toby vein?"

"Not exactly."

"Some fat, swearing, lying, drinking knave, I suppose?"

"Or I had not asked you to play it," returned the poet.

"Well, well, it doth in some sort jump with my humour. I am but frail, and that's

the truth, the more flesh the more frailty.
Like your own fat knight."

"Fat Jack is the character you will have
to personate."

"What, Falstaff again?"

"Yes, Falstaff—IN LOVE."

"Oh, lud, methinks that will be a circumstance. I love the part already. Give
it me at once, good Will, to study."

* * * *

The news that Shakspeare had returned
to his old haunt in Chepe, soon spread like
wild fire, and besides the actors whom he
had summoned to be present on this night,
there came a whole host of his familiars
of all descriptions.

He was in good spirits, "good fooling,"
as he called it, with all things, and all men ; so

that actors, and nobles, and poets, and authors sat and talked, and sang and revelled ; nay, not a few of them smoked, too—albeit there was still men of all sorts who took a pride in railing at the weed, and like King James in after days, trying to write it down. 'Twas a rare sight to see. Bardolph and Pistol, (the original men we mean) were there, Slender and Page, too ; all in the earlier part of the evening had their parts handed to them, and instructions given them for assembling at the theatre next day in order that the creator of those several characters should give them his own instructions as to how those parts were to be played ; and then the great poet threw off all care and all business, and joined the circle, and daff'd the world aside, as he took part in the hilarity of the hour.

Old Maynard was present on that night, and opened his eyes with astonishment; for well as he knew his friend, he had little conception what he was amongst his comrades and brethren of the buskin, and in the mixed company amongst which his wit, his wisdom, his joviality, and his wondrous powers altogether, made him the idol. Suffice it, all there felt the superiority of his genius, whilst he himself assumed nothing. The greatness of the man shone out in every word, and look, and gesture, and yet "'twas but the poor player" after all.

CHAPTER XIV.

Yes, there, we say, sat the man whom it had pleased the Great Creator to present with such gifts, such intuition, such knowledge, that all other mortals, the most gifted even, would seem but as scholars who came to learn, yet came not near him. All the wisdom of the schools, all the teaching of all the books since printed have not come near his genius or his page.

And there he sat in old London, revelling

amidst the throng ; that great ' heir of fame,' the wonder of the world. He quaffed his liquor, he uttered his conceits, he railed upon all and sundry. He set the table in a roar, he listened to the chimes at midnight, and we very much fear that he "awoke the night owls with a catch," as he went reeling home to bed ; for the man was mortal after all, and like mortal men, frail ; no perfect being, no monster of sanctimonious purity, but a weak, debile, erring mortal, one who detested a Puritan as he detested an unfilled can. And truly, for our own part, we love him all the more, for what perhaps the "unco good" would have most blamed him, for his sinful ways, his ungodly profession, and his profane writings.* But was his

* A clergyman of high repute, one day speaking

profession ungodly, was his teaching ill? we think not, and we will judge him as mercifully as he doubtless would have judged others.

“The quality of mercy is not strained:

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:

It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;

’Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes

of Shakspeare’s plays, professed he never had, nor ever would quote a line of his profane trash. “If my library contained a copy of his works,” he said, “I would hurl it into the fire without mercy.”

“You should always have mercy,” said a friend. “‘The quality of mercy is not strained;’” and then he repeated the speech. The irate parson listened. “I never read that attentively,” he said, “it is very beautiful; I think I will look into Shakspeare.” He did so; he became a convert; he wrote better sermons ever after.

The throned monarch better than his crown.
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings,
But mercy is above this scepter'd sway,

* * * * *

It is an attribute to God himself."

The next morning was a busy one with our poet. The dramatis personæ were in attendance at the Theatre of the Blackfriars. They were waiting for him to read the new piece to them, and to give them his own ideas regarding it.

Many there—would-be judges of dramatic matters in general—had expressed their doubts as to the probability of such a piece succeeding, or being perfect in its parts so as to fit in. Some had compared their

parts, and cavilled amongst themselves. Envy—sharp envy—jealousy, too, were at work. One or two liked not their parts at all; Master Slender said he had too little to do, Master Ford affirmed that he had too much; Master Fenton wanted to be written up a trifle, “he felt himself quite a nonentity.” There was a fustian sort of fellow, who had been a hanger-on of the camp, and had now turned actor for the nonce, and who had played Pistol in the first and second parts of Henry IV, he too cavilled at the little himself and “yoke fellows,” Bardolf and Nym, had to do.

There were no female actresses at this period, but the two actors who were cast for the Merry Wives, were clever artists in that line of business; they felt quite contented

with their parts, for they saw what a deal of fun and frolic they had in hand. He who played Shallow was a rare fellow, he saw what the author meant. "The dozen white louses" made it all as clear as noon-day. The author was writing down the ass that sent him, or tried to send him to starve in the open world. Parson Hugh and Doctor Caius were also rare comedians ; but actors will be actors, and even they cavilled, and talked, and wanted this part altered, or that touched up. In short, actors will be crochety, and Shakspeare's company, splendid fellows as they were, were as full of crochets as their descendants.

In the midst of their prattle and gabble, for some were already getting up their study, the great man was amongst them.

There was a small table on the stage, for the Theatre of the Blackfriars exhibited no splendid green-room such as our more modern structures exhibit, and the poet stood beside it, whilst his fellow players gathered around him.

“I’ll read the piece to you, my masters all,” he said, “and then you can better judge of it. Since her Majesty hath honoured me by this command, I am anxious all the more that it should succeed. What say ye? will ye lend me your ears?”

There was no murmur or discontent now, save a murmur of applause which ran through the assembled actors, and forthwith Shakspeare read to them

“THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.”

CHAPTER XV.

BOTH Shakspeare and his friend Rookwood had taken considerable interest in the pirate. They saw that he was a man with much good in him, but one whom the world's buffets and the world's scorn had driven to evil courses. Man had been his enemy, and man had continued his persecutor. From trivial faults and recklessness he had fallen at first, and his after life had

been but a succession of ill-luck; so that at last having adventured in search of fortune, and been wrecked both in purse and prospect, he had been captured by pirates in those latitudes of license, and mixed up in the deeds and doings of their calling.

After hearing his story, Shakspeare furnished him with money, and together with Rookwood he set off for the wars in the Low Countries, there to "mend his life or be rid on't."

They both carried introductions to Sir Philip Sidney, given them by Shakspeare. Sidney gave them such charges as he could; Rookwood he kept near his own person, and employed him to advantage, so that he was close beside him when he received

the wound at Zutphen that finally terminated his great career.

In the various accounts of this battle there are irreconcilable contradictions, so that hardly anything is clearly traceable. Both sides had made great preparations, and the town was invested, Sir Philip watching it from the land, and Leicester guarding it by water.

In the battle which ensued, some five hundred Englishmen with Sidney at their head, advanced to the very waters, where they suddenly found themselves opposed to above a thousand of the enemy's cavalry, besides being within range of the enemy's guns. Sidney's horse at the first onset was blown almost to atoms, but himself unhurt.

He succeeded, however, in bringing the remnant of this party off, and engaged in a second charge. Unluckily he threw off his cuishes, and in a third charge, in which all the English who were now in the field, took part, their gallant leader was stricken to the earth ; a shot had entered his left leg above the knee, broke the bone, and glanced upwards far into the thigh. His horse, taking flight, galloped to a distant part of the field, where Leicester, who had never himself been personally engaged in the struggle was seated.

Then it was that overcome with agony and thirst, he asked for water, and when at length some was found and brought, although he had placed it to his lips, he relinquished it untasted in favour of the

poor dying soldier who had fixed his eyes upon it as he was being conveyed to the rear.

"Thy necessity," he said to the man, "is yet greater than mine."

"Oh, Philip, Philip," cried Leicester,* "I am grieved to see thee thus."

"Oh noble Sir Philip Sidney," cried Sir William Russell, (himself bleeding and faint with recent wounds), and at the same time kneeling to support him as he lay. "Never did man bear himself so well or so bravely as thou hast this day done; and see the dire result of all thy bravery and thy gallant leading."

So fell the great, the good, the glorious Sidney.

- He had kept out of danger the whole day.

"O for the voice of that wild horn,
On Fontarabian's echoes borne—
The dying hero's call,
That told imperial Charlemagne
How Paynim sons of swarthy Spain,
Had wrought his champion's fall."

A letter came from Rookwood to his friend at Barnes, descriptive of the doings of the army, and telling of Sidney's wound. "Alas! alas!" it said, "none know but those who have been with him, how we shall miss him here. We mourn in our tents as if our nearest relative was lost to us, as if the very soul of the English army was gone from it. To the meanest soldier he was a friend. Never shall I forget his words as he addressed our few and fainting troops, and cheered them on

to victory. 'Remember,' he said, 'that we are Englishmen; few as we stand here, we must conquer or die, for we came of a race whose deeds have raised the dread, and won the praise of the universal world.' "

After speaking in Sidney's praise, the letter told of the incompetency of the Commander-in-Chief, Leicester, and then it told of private matters, and how his uncle had sent a message to the camp from England, promising him all he had if he would but return and take up his abode in the old moated house in Kent.

"But no," said Rookwood, "I shall perhaps never again set foot in England. I am a soldier now, and will either rise to high fortune, or leave my bones in some counter-scarp. Farewell, my friend, all grace and

remembrance to one whose name I always set in my prayers, whenever the battle is most hot and danger most imminent."

CHAPTER XVI.

“O’ how wretched

Is that poor man that hangs on princes’ favours.
There is, betwixt that smile we should aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have.”

HER Majesty the Queen spoke slightly of her former cup-bearer, now he was down and dying in her service. She was heard to call him an overweening boy, one who must needs be thrusting himself wherever

danger was to be found ; “ fie on’t, oh fie !” Still at times she affected a grief she did not feel, assumed a virtue, but had it not. “ The play was now the thing.” The Merry Wives of Windsor did indeed make her Majesty laugh.

Nay, the whole court shook their sides, spite of “ the presence.” Then again, when old Parson Hugh and Doctor Caius clapper-clawed each other during their singular duel, they laughed still more ; and then the buck basket, and fat Jack trundled into the Thames like a bundle of foul linen, and the working out of the broad mirth of the intrigue by the false supernatural scenes round Herne’s Oak, together with the sweet episode of Anne Page, and her several suitors. What a

picture of rural life in Elizabeth's reign did it present.

"This is Falstaff in love with a vengeance," said the Queen, wiping the tears her laughter had caused. "And with two at a time, too ; oh, the pestilent old rogue. Isn't it marvellously droll, my lords? Go bear our greetings to Master Brandon ; tell him we are greatly pleased with his personation of the Fat Knight. Give him this jewel, and d'ye hear, bid that pleasant fellow Shakspeare attend us. We ought to thank him personally for this treat."

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME few years must now be supposed to have passed away, and some mighty events to have happened in the world's wide history. Mighty events, terrible and dreadful; such as battles, rebellions, executions, and all those dire changes which so stirring a period was likely to bring forth.

London Bridge exhibited no less than three hundred heads upon its gate houses,

and even the walls of her royal residence in the Tower, were also converted into a sort of Golgotha, and garnished everywhere with the grinning and ghastly visages of those who had suffered by axe, cord, and the torture.

Battles, and sieges, treasons, all, we say, had passed in the few short years which must be supposed to have elapsed, ere we again look upon some of the old haunts and old acquaintances of former pages.

She who had consigned so many friends, so many faithful followers, so many traitors to the block, is now herself in agony.

She lies now writhing and rolling upon the very floor of her palace at Richmond, and as she lies there, she cries out for alleviation, for assistance, for help, from

anyone, or from anything that could relieve her racking pains, and restore her to "a sound and pristine health." It was indeed a scene, such as the recent drama of King John in its last act pourtrays.

"How fares your Majesty?"

"I'll fare! dead, forsook, cast off;
And none of you will bid the winter come,
To thrust his icy fingers in my maw;
Nor let my kingdom's rivers take their course
Through my burn'd bosom; nor entreat the
north
To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips,
And comfort me with cold."

It was, however, some consolation to those about her, that the fevered agony she for some time suffered under, and which

had rendered her a spectacle of terror and aversion to all around, at length gave way to a somewhat calmer mood. But still she battled fearfully against the stern decree which had gone forth, and no entreaties could induce her to go to bed, nay, like the Saxon Duke Siward, she at one time resolved to die standing, if die she must. She caused herself to be lifted up by her attendants, and for fourteen hours stood face to face with the "bare-ribbed monster," as if in defiance of his powers.

"To bed," she said in reply to Cecil, "heaven knows man, if thou wert but to see such things in your bed as I have seen in mine, you would never go there again."

Oh vanity of vanities, how all was dissolving now into absolute nothingness.

She glanced around at those faces of awe standing near; those sycophantic courtiers still in dread of "offended majesty"—majesty, which was now all but a clod. All was indeed vanity; the very closet which contained her eighty wigs, and her hundreds of jewelled dresses; the crown of England emblazoned and carved on every coigne of vantage in that room, all fell to abatement and low price.

Repentance—did she feel that? hardly at times, and yet what would she have given to undo but a tythe of what she had done. Where was he who she had cut off in his youth and beauty? where was the handsome, the chivalrous Essex? Alas! like Clarence, she saw now but a vision, "a creature with bright hair dabbled in blood." The young,

the beautiful, the brave. Some fiend seemed to whisper in her ear the name of Essex. She held up the hand that had signed his death warrant, and wished it had been chopped off at the wrist ere that warrant had been so signed. Then she clasped her throat with her hands, as she thought of a sister queen. "Oh God!" she said, "I am tied by a chain of iron."

That was indeed a terrible night to all in Richmond Palace. At times she would sit with her eyes firmly fixed on the floor, ghastly and emaciated, hour after hour. After four-and-twenty hours of silent horror and remorse at all the executions and cruelties she had put her hand to, worldly thoughts were again predominant.

"I'll have no rascal's son in my seat,"

she cried frantically ; " I will have one worthy to be a king."

Then came remorse, and then again she murmured the names of those innocent men she had sent to their account before her.

" Oh, when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth is made, than shall that hand and seal witness against her to damnation." She prayed at last, prayed till the knees of the poor old Archbishop were pained and weary.

What a scene, too, there was without the palace on that awful night. The minds of men would seem to be doubly impressed, doubly awe-stricken when royalty lies dying. The very sentinels spoke in whispers all around ; men-at-arms, clad in armour of

proof, prowled about ; servitors and attendants stole in and out with softened tread ; all was hushed as if with some great awe, something dire to come.

Under the arched gateways and low-roofed doors and posterns, the various officials and attendants upon the nobles, the nobles themselves even, glided noiselessly and with trouble on their brows ; men put the finger to the lip as they spoke—"I pray you tread softly, that the blind mole may not hear a footfall." Yet none without, few within, knew exactly how things were progressing ; even the vigilance of the self-interested spies, who hung about, and peered, whispered, and with haggard faces inquired if she was dead yet—even they were baffled by the few within, who kept all close

locked and guarded around the chamber of death.

A man fully, yet lightly armed, lurked alone beneath one of the windows of her chamber. He paced up and down, ever and anon looking up and around, seemingly fearful of being seen; yet always with his eye upon one particular window, that window near where she lay. He paced there long, sometimes with arms folded, always anxious and disturbed. Suddenly "in the dead waste and middle of the night," a slight noise above caused him to draw near. A beautiful face looked out for one instant, and a beautiful hand, white as sculptured alabaster, dropped a sapphire ring.

Sir Robert Carey caught the token as it was dropped by the hand of his sister,

Lady Scroope. It was enough, the Queen of England was dead.

A goodly steed stood ready saddled in a stall near at hand. Sir Robert Carey hardly gave the servitor who held it in readiness time to drag it from the stall ere he was in the saddle, and on his way to Scotland. The ring he carried had been confided by King James to Lady Scroope, an assured token which was to announce Elizabeth's death whenever it might take place.

That was indeed a ride ; over moss, over moor, through wood, and waste, and fell, and forest ; danger and impediment in every mile. We think we see Sir Robert spurring on and on, hour after hour, night and day, hiring such horses as he could ; taking anything he could get. Bearing a mys-

terious look as he mounted and spurred on, like a messenger after a battle, holding fast to his ring. All through the northern countries, across the border. Look at him, solitary, alone, spurring onward over the Shapfell, in Cumberland. On and on he goes, the lone Cheviots are won, so bleak, so wild. The wind blowing through and amongst them, like a tornado. 'Twas a wonderful ride that, and many were the chances against the rider ever getting to his journey's end. A human carcase lying in a gorge or torrent, torn by the Highland eagle, or with twenty stabs, "the least a death to nature," and a skeleton steed half devoured by the hill fox, was a much more likely consummation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON the night the Queen died there was, as may easily be supposed, considerable excitement and some grief in old Maynard's cottage. Perhaps, humble in comparison as they all were in that old homestead, a more sincere grief and a greater sympathy was felt for the Queen of the realm, than many of her titled and ennobled, or even kindred and allies felt.

At Court 'twas interest, worldly interest ; self-seeking and intrigue reigned there. But in old Maynard's cottage they grieved like loyal English folks, who knew no guile, who had nothing to gain, and would have scorned to touch it if they had. They mourned as God-fearing, good hearted, honest hearts should mourn. What little they had seen of Her Majesty had impressed them with her goodness ; all and everything else they ignored now that she was in extremity.

"Poor soul, poor soul !" said old Maynard. "She's going where another will judge her. Let us not now talk of what has been. All those heads stuck upon London Bridge, and all those Smithfield fires, said ye. Well, well, my masters all,

I suppose she felt herself bound to do as she has done, or was advised to, or, peradventure, she could not have done it. No, no. Let her rest now. If she hath done ill she feels it no doubt."

"Look out, dame," continued the old Miller, setting down his pipe; "look forth, I say, and see if anyone be passing from Richmond. Truly every hour now should bring us tidings. I heard yesterday that things were almost at the worst; but they keep all so secret that a body knows not what to believe; nay, shouldn't be surprised if she be really and truly dead even now."

"Geraldine is gone up to the Hall to hear what she can learn there," said Dame Maynard; "and it's time she were back, for

the dews are falling ;” and then the old dame bustled about after her usual manner, and set the viands on the table ; for to eat, and to drink, and make all straight and tidy seemed her express vocation.

The setting sun was just descending amongst the massive foliage of Shene Forest, as old Maynard, growing somewhat impatient for his niece’s return, stepped to the old porch and looked forth.

As he did so several horsemen appeared in the distance ; and one, who by his war-like accoutrements appeared the chief of the party, approached the Miller. The scarf upon his shoulder, and the weapons he carried, together with the trappings of his steed proclaimed him one high in command. Albeit the furred collar of his cloak, the

fashion of his doublet, and the armour he wore, also seemed to show that he was from foreign parts. He wore one of the lighter helmets of the period, with the visor closed, and stooped his plumed head as he bowed courteously to the Miller.

Old Maynard was the soul of hospitality. He at once bade the cavalier good even, and invited him to alight and enter his cottage.

"Your worship," he said, "if I may judge from the condition of that splendid steed, hath ridden far to-day. Wilt alight and take some refreshment ere you go forward."

The cavalier beckoned to one of his attendants, thanked the Miller for his courtesy, threw the reins to the trooper, dismounted and entered the cottage.

He stood and looked around for a moment or two, and then seated himself in the chair old Maynard placed for him.

He seemed more an observer than a talker, and as Master Maynard, like most men in his station of life, was imbued with a certain amount of curiosity, he again addressed his visitor.

"Your worship is bound for Richmond, I opine?" he said.

"I am," returned the cavalier; "but I fear matters are in extremity there."

"Well, I believe that things are bad enough; nay, I fear, from all I have gathered, that Her Majesty cannot last long. Your worship is from London perhaps."

"I am," returned the cavalier. "I bear dispatches from a foreign court; the which

I am directed to impart to no ear but Her Majesty's. The news I have gathered on my way here, leads me to think I have come on a bootless errand, and that I must return as I came."

"I fear the Queen's ears will never more comprehend earthly matters," said Maynard. "But again I inquire will your worship not deign to doff your casque, and partake of some refreshment after your ride?" he continued, filling and handing the stranger a cup of canary.

"I may not remove my casque," returned the cavalier. "Nevertheless a cup of wine will not be ungrateful to me;" as he said this the stranger partially lifted the visor of his helmet, and once more looked around the apartment.

"I drink to the health of all beneath this roof," he said.

"My service and the same to you," returned the jolly Miller filling and returning the pledge. "By the Lord your worship rides well provided, and you are well advised so to do. For just now the 'gentlemen of the shade' are somewhat over bold and exceeding numerous. Only last week my Lord Rich, a gentleman of the Court, was met withal, and now lies dangerously wounded; some say without hope of recovery."

"My Lord Rich, eh?" said the cavalier. "I have heard some tidings of that spark in former days. His loss will not be great even should he die, an' all be true that is spoken of him."

"Your worship says sooth there, too," returned Maynard. "He was ever an evil subject—a bad man."

"Doth his wife still live?" inquired the traveller.

"She lives," replied the Miller, "but not with him; they have long ago been separated."

"Hardly anything else could have been expected," returned the cavalier. "It was but an ill advised match at best. By the way, I have a visit I wish to make whilst in this neighbourhood, to your great physician, Doctor Dee. Can you tell me whether he is presently at his house hard by here?"

"Neither is the Doctor nor the house he lived in any longer to be found in this neighbourhood," returned Maynard. "The

Doctor hath sometime back gone to foreign parts. His house was beset by a large mob, who became impressed with a belief that he held communication with the enemy of mankind, and burnt it to the ground."

"I am sorry to hear it," said the cavalier ; "for there was much good in the man after all."

"Till his connection with the Court and Court nobles spoilt him," returned Maynard, "there was so. Howbeit, like many others, he fell when the Queen's countenance fell from him. Yes, like many others, a black look proved his ruin ; all fell from him. He got into evil repute ; and finally, an' he had not taken himself off, he would have been cast into the flames of his own dwelling."

* * * *

At this period of the conversation Geraldine Maynard returned; she tripped into the cottage, gave a somewhat surprised look at the cavalier, who rose immediately she came in, and then she proceeded to tell the news she had managed to gather.

The Queen it was believed was in extremity. But none in that household knew, or were likely to know, whether she was yet really dead. The firm belief of the whole household at the Manor house, was that she had expired during the night.

"In that case," muttered the cavalier to himself, "I must try and see Cecil."

"Will your worshipful honour really leave us again?" said the Miller, as he observed the cavalier was now preparing to start.

"I must so, good Master Maynard," he returned; "I must again take the road. By the way," he said, and he bent his gaze upon Geraldine, "I was commissioned, lady, to give this casket into your hands. It is from one who has risen in rank in a foreign land, and the service of a foreign power. It is some trifling remembrance, I rather think I heard the giver say, won on the field of battle in Poland, and to be delivered into the hands of the niece of Master Maynard of Barnes Common."

As the cavalier spoke, he produced a small bound casket from beneath his cloak, and placed it in Geraldine's hand.

"You may not open it," he said, "till twelve hours have passed."

Geraldine looked at the casket, and then

she looked at the giver. Her piercing eyes seemed to go straight through the bars of his half-closed visor.

“ May I not inquire the name of the giver of this ?” she said, holding up the casket.

“ I have executed my commission,” said the cavalier preparing to depart. “ Farewell and a blessing on all in this house ;” and the cavalier after another deep and searching look at the fair Geraldine, strode to the door, slowly mounted his horse, and bowing low to the inmates, who had assembled there to do him all the honour they could, rode sadly on towards Richmond.

Old Maynard’s curiosity was hardly to be stifled, he laid his hand upon the bridle rein of the attendant trooper, and begged the favour of his master’s name.

“His Excellency the General has no name in England now,” said the soldier. “In the country of his adoption, and under the king he serves, he has high sounding titles enough ; titles won upon the stricken field, the best titles we soldiers care to acknowledge.”

“His Excellency the General,” mused and muttered old Maynard, putting his finger to his nose, “but that his voice sounded hollow within his closed visor, I should say that I have heard it before.”

As Geraldine returned into the cottage, she seated herself, lent her head upon her hand, and a tear or two coursed one another down her “innocent cheek.” Her aunt approached her, took up the casket, and gazed upon it. It was of oak, highly carved,

banded with gold clasps, and jewelled, a golden key being attached by a chain of the same metal.

"If that noble looking gentleman had not given Geraldine this grand looking casket," she said, "I should say he was no better than a common robber."

"A robber, dame?"

"Yes, a robber, look ye; for when our Geraldine came in, she undid the small brooch which fastened her cloak, and put it down on the table, and I saw him take up the brooch and fasten it to the inside lining of his doublet. There now, was not that a queer thing to do?"

"Dang it all, girl," said Master Maynard turning to Geraldine, "why, 'twas my gift

In few, her Majesty and her attendant ladies were so much pleased with the oddity of their entertainer, and his domicile, that they remained for two days his guests ; during which time he taught them many things, and gave them several lessons in wood-craft and forest matters.

part of the world where he could with most honour draw his sword, thither he went. Ere he did so, however, he pardoned his fair enemy, as he termed her; more especially when he discovered that she had been cajoled and almost forced into the hateful nuptials by her own family and friends.

Shakspeare, we have already seen, was the intimate friend of Sidney. In all things he admired and loved him, and it was something to be admired, beloved, and set above other men by Shakspeare. If ever man approached the faultless, it was Philip Sidney. What a man for a woman to lose.

“Take him for all in all,”

She ne’er could even hope

“To look upon his like again.”

And well did Penelope know what she

had lost, and she also knew that her own conduct had lost her such a husband, and gained her such a loss as she now suffered from.

“If I prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart strings,
I'd whistle her down the wind,
To prey at fortune.”

Such had been Sir Philip's feelings, and such had been his intent; nay, he *had* whistled her down the wind, as he *thought*. Men think they can do such things; and so the “courtiers scholar's eye, tongue and sword,” betook himself to the wars, where history tells the further story of the dying soldier's fame. Apparently it was the big war, the plumed troop, the spirit stirring

drum, the ear piercing fife, and all the quality, pride, and circumstance of glorious war that took him there; but alas, "within, within," 'twas there the spirit wraught."

The Queen might well call him the brightest gem of her court, and refuse to allow Poland to have him for a king. The man was almost too noble, too honest, too unselfish, for the world he mixed with. He sorrowed as he looked upon it, and peradventure he found more solace in the companionship of one only friend, than in anything else the world could bestow upon him.

And so the "poor player," the mighty genius, whose printed page had hardly yet seen the light, was appreciated, and loved by the hero; appreciated and loved by one who

had little but his love and appreciation to bestow.

“ Give me that man,
That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him
In my heart’s core, aye, in my heart of hearts.”

Both Sidney and his father-in-law, Walsingham, had nobly striven to live honestly in the midst of courtly hollowness; both had watched with deep interest, and done their devoir in all things to aid the battle of freedom which was now waging in the Low Countries against Spanish and Flemish thralldom. Both, too, were famous for their generous patronage of learning and literature, and how they both hated the Queen’s suitor, Anjou, Shakspeare* well knew, and

* It is a question whether Shakspeare, had he

Anjou stood for the portrait of the bastard brother of Pedro of Arragon, a man of whom his sister, Margaret of Navarre, said, if fraud and cruelty were banished from the earth, there was in him enough of both to replenish it.

Unlike most other courtiers, Sidney had dared to be independent, and although imbued with all that graceful courtesy and finished

lived in any other age or reign, and fallen amongst other and lesser men than he was associated with, could have penned the dramas he has given to the world. Nay, if England had been shadowed by other forests, and other scenes exhibited on its surface, perhaps we might have wanted something of the lovely touches he has given us. One touch of his wand, perhaps, was excited by one glance of what was before him.

elegance of which he was so capable, he could not condescend to practice the acts of courtier craft. He gave her Majesty his opinion of her intended ; a Frenchman, a papist, son of the Jezebel of the age ; one, too, whose brother had made oblation of his own sister's marriage the cause to make sacrifice of her own brethren in religion.

CHAPTER VI.

IRELAND cost the maiden queen more vexation than she could express. The expense of it pricked her conscience, as she affirmed, and the ill success of the nobles and generals she sent there depressed and wearied her ; whilst the horrible barbarity with which they caused the country to be devastated, is almost unprecedented, save by the exterminations of the Caribs by the Spaniards.

Nay, when the horrors her officers had inflicted there were told her, she declared that in place of shepherds to govern, she had sent wolves to devour the land. "For by my fay," she added, "they have left me only ashes and carcases to reign over."

When Geraldine, and Rookwood, and the pirate were cast ashore, the country had just flamed out into open rebellion. The Desmonds and Eustaces again were in arms against the English Lord Deputy Mountjoy. The venerable Earl of Desmond, crushed by overwhelming numbers, had become a fugitive, and for three years had been wandering, like Prince Charles in after times, in glens and forests, seeking such occasional shelter as he could find in lonely huts and ruined castles.

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IRELAND cost the maiden queen more vexation than she could express. The expense of it pricked her conscience, as she affirmed, and the ill success of the nobles and generals she sent there depressed and wearied her ; whilst the horrible barbarity with which they caused the country to be devastated, is almost unprecedented, save by the exterminations of the Caribs by the Spaniards.

Nay, when the horrors her officers had inflicted there were told her, she declared that in place of shepherds to govern, she had sent wolves to devour the land. "For by my fay," she added, "they have left me only ashes and carcasses to reign over."

When Geraldine, and Rookwood, and the pirate were cast ashore, the country had just flamed out into open rebellion. The Desmonds and Eustaces again were in arms against the English Lord Deputy Mountjoy. The venerable Earl of Desmond, crushed by overwhelming numbers, had become a fugitive, and for three years had been wandering, like Prince Charles in after times, in glens and forests, seeking such occasional shelter as he could find in lonely huts and ruined castles.

The false step taken by the Pope during this queen's reign, by making the point of her reign *de jure*, instead of considering it *de facto*, forced her into the measure of insisting that all Ireland should renounce the Catholic religion and become Protestant, and this she enforced under the most severe penal laws.

During such a state of things, when the dwellings and crops of the miserable natives were ravaged and burnt, and their cattle killed wherever the soldiery of the Queen came ; when such a dreadful war of extermination existed, that whole families were known to perform the most dreadful acts of cannibalism, and children were forced even to attempt to devour the dead bodies of their own parents, slaughtered, and left to rot on

their own miserable hearths, it is not to be supposed that Geraldine and Rookwood found a bed of roses.

The wretched turf-built hovel in which they found a shelter, or rather, as soon as they entered, discovered themselves prisoners, was nearly filled with half naked, armed savages; savage in look as in disposition, and whom the very sight of an Englishman was abhorrent. Nay, they would have been murdered on the instant of their capture, with as little ceremony as an American Indian tomahawks and scalps the prisoners of a hostile tribe; but luckily there was an officer of some authority at that moment in the cabin.

The miserable refuge amongst other cabins was situate near the sea-shore, and

on the heights above, some half a mile off in the distance, stood one of those black looking castles, the ruins of which are still to be seen all over that lovely island.

An Ossian-like edifice, looming aloft in the mist, now nearly hidden from sight, and then again, as the vapours rolled past, coming out strong and prominent like a fortress in some fleeting panorama.

During the scene of excitement which was going on around them, it was soon made apparent to Geraldine and Rookwood that their lives hung upon a very slender thread. War in its blackest, most awful form was raging around. The people they were amongst were in open rebellion against England, and any persons from that country cast ashore stood but a poor chance.

A half clothed, half armed kern, who stood in the relation of non-commissioned officer, perhaps, to the semi-barbarous chief of the party in the hut, had orders to care for and protect the shipwrecked till they could be conveyed to the lord of the castle hard by.

"Wouldn't it be saving of trouble, yer honour, jist to take them out beyanst there, and dale with 'em quietly, the heretic wretches that they are?"

"Not unless you want yer own throat slit next moment, Dennis," said the officer.

"Sure and have we not the orders of the Desmond himself up beyanst there, that all prisoners are to be seen by himself."

"But the clothes the wretches have on, methinks, we might get a waif sometime ;

there's three suits there fit for any belted earl to wear."*

"Sure then, the less fit for the likes of you and I, honey. But, come, get an escort under arms, we must to the castle at once, and bring these persons with us. Who knows what yonder man there in the fine hat and feather and the gold laced coat may be?"

"Will the great Desmond see them to-night, think ye?"

"Aye, will he, and strike off their heads to-night, too, an' they give not better account of themselves than they have done here."

* In Elizabeth's day, some of the Irish kings are said to have sat in their halls surrounded by savage retainers half naked.

Accordingly in a very short time after their landing, Geraldine, and her protector Rookwood, and the pirate, were ordered out of the hut and marched up to the dark castle on the hill "beyanst."

The Earl of Desmond, the head of the Fitzgeralds, old as he was, was of a fierce and untameable nature. With a price upon his head, and hunted from rock to glen, and from glen to bog, like some wild beast of prey, he was still unconquered; and albeit at one moment he was necessitated to hide his head in some den or cavern in the woods, at the next he would appear again at the head of his kerns, and keep state and grandeur in some one of his strongholds.

At the present time, like Lear with

diminished followers, and raging under the dangers and difficulties of his situation, with some thousands of infuriated soldiers fell and savage as himself, he occupied a tract of country near the coast.

What a spectacle this king of a county presented at that period! What a picture to behold. Himself, his castle, "the times abuse," and the wild country he sat in state in. The very castle itself was but a ruin through which the moon shone here and there through loophole and window.

The Earl himself, with beard of snow which reached below his girdle, partially clad in heavy armour, the long blade of his crusading ancestors at his back, and reaching from spur to shoulder, sat in state in the great dark hall.

To Geraldine his appearance, and all around and about him, seemed as primitive and singular as if she were looking upon some scene in the early ages of the country.

The wild look of the subordinate chiefs and their followers, some of them ragged kerns, sitting and lying about the lower end of the rude hall. The harper, clad in antique vestments, who touched his instrument and sent forth low, wailing tones which were calculated to soothe the distempered rage of this island king, and to reach even the savagery of his followers, half maddened as they now were with the liquor they quaffed.

It was somewhat unlucky that Geraldine and her companion in adversity were brought

before this old earl-king at a moment when he was distempered with a recent defeat, and from having imbibed rather too freely after the toils of battle and slaughter. The irregular army which he presently commanded had for some little time been victorious, they had fought fiercely amidst their own fastnesses ; but on that day a large force under Fitzeustace had been cut off and destroyed. The Desmond having with difficulty escaped to his present stronghold.

“English, say ye,” said the Earl, as cup in hand, half reclining he was listening to the tones of the harp, whilst a bare legged messenger, a sort of henchman, prostrated himself, and hissed out in under tones the intelligence that three English captives had been taken on the sea-shore.

“English, said ye, and seamen. My curse upon all that come from England.”

The high courage of the Desmond, like that of his countrymen, was tinged with ferocity at this period to an awful extent. A murmur of approbation and delight accordingly ran through that dark hall as the Earl gnashed his teeth and ordered their instant execution.

The castle in which the Earl now held his brief state, was called the Bloody Castle, or the Castle of Blood, from the numerous executions its court-yard had witnessed. Few conquered races have been found inclined to spare, and the carnage, ruin, and desolation which then fell upon the land is to be read even yet in the countenances of its sons, and the hatred with which they still regard the English.

The minor chieftain, whose outpost duty during the night had made him the capturer of Geraldine and her companion in adversity, and who knew by experience that the midnight ferocity of the Desmond was sometimes followed by the morning's reflection and repentance, stepped between his captives and the Earl's wrath. Being in some little favour, and married to a relation of the Earl's, he dared venture to delay.

"Touch the harp again, Morris," he said to the wild looking minstrel. "A gentler touch, man, 'twill bring him back to former scenes in this hall, what time his own daughter stood in jeopardy in these wars. And d'ye hear, Dennis," he added to a subordinate, "bring the captives before him that he may at least judge them ere they die."

Whilst the chieftain spoke, the softened strains of the instrument sounded ; the soul of music shed its influence, and a heavy summons lay like lead upon the stern Earl. When he awoke his eye rested upon the captives.

First his piercing eye looked upon the dark-haired Geraldine, then it ran over the tall and noble form of the English gentleman of a fair race, and then upon the pirate.

“Who and what are these?” he said.

“The prisoners, mighty Desmond,” said the subordinate with eastern submissiveness.

“Did I not order them for execution, caitiff?” he said, looking fiercely upon the chieftain.

"You did."

"And you disobeyed, son of a wolf, cur.
Why did ye so?"

"Because I feared."

"Feared, wretch! If I told ye to nail
them alive by their tongues to the outward
walls, 'twas your duty to obey."

"Doubtless, mighty Desmond; but —"

"But what?"

"One moment, only one," said the chief-
tain, approaching and whispering a few
words in the Earl's ear.

"A woman, say ye!" exclaimed the
Earl in surprise. "What this seeming ship-
boy?"

"That same."

The Desmond hesitated; he again looked
steadily at Geraldine.

resign the high command I hold even for a time, and come back here since you so much wish it. But you ask much of me, uncle; more almost than I can promise. There is a secret reason why I could have wished to set the seas between myself and Britain for evermore."

"Then, by the Lord Harry!" said the squire clapping his hands, "there's a woman at the bottom of all the melancholy which oppresses you. Come, confess and be hanged, is't not so?"

Rookwood made no answer, but hung his head.

"Who is she? what is she? where does she dwell?" continued the squire, delighted at his own penetration. "Fore Heaven, but I'll woo her for thee, man; aye, and win

her, too, an' she be the most disdainful she that ever trod the earth. Come, we'll bribe her, we'll give her half, of all we have, an' she will but accept thee for a husband."

Rookwood smiled at the old man's vehemence.

"I'll go to Poland and fetch her. What is she, a princess of the blood? Never heed, man, an' she be. An English squire, with such an estate as thou wilt have, could buy up half a score of the domains of those beggarly foreign counts and German princes."

"Uncle," said Rookwood, laying his hand on the old man's arm, "it may not be. She I love better than my own soul has no heart to give; she loves another, not wisely,

perhaps, but still I could never wed where there was no affection."

"Tut, tut!" said the squire; "tell me not on't, boy. Thou art a most proper fellow of thy hands, and no woman ought to reject thee, be thy rival who or what he may. I'll go myself, I say, in proper state and woo her for thee. And now come,

"'The horns, the horns, the lusty horns—'

We'll have that song of thy friend's to cheer us, and then to supper."

The above colloquy had taken place after a day's sport in the thick woodlands. The party had sat down in a glade of the forest to refresh themselves, as was the custom in those easy going days, and at a signal from the squire several of his green coated

foresters rose and stept forth, and wound
out a lively strain upon their bugles, whilst
one of them, who had a pleasing voice,
sung Amiens' song.

“ Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat.
Come hither, come hither, come hither :
Here shall he see no enemy,
But winter and rough weather.

“ Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to lie i' the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
Content with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither :
Here shall he see no enemy
But winter and rough weather.”

“ And now tell me, my dear boy,” said

the squire as they sat together after supper, "tell me, since you say you must depart to-morrow, who and what is this fair Lindabrides, this ladie love with whom you seem so much enamoured. Is she some o'er proud dame o' the Court, or is she some foreign princess whom thou hast fallen in with in thy travels?"

"Neither the one nor the other, good uncle," said Rookwood. "She who I have reason to prefer above all the women I have yet seen, has nothing to recommend her but her own bright excellence and exceeding beauty. She is the niece of one Maynard, a respectable yeoman, by trade a miller, and residing upon Barnes Common, in Surrey.

The squire threw himself back in his chair, set his goblet gently and gingerly

upon the table, blew out his cheeks, and stared at his nephew for some time without speaking.

"A miller's daughter!" he at length said.
"A miller's daughter, good Walter? have I heard thee aright, good youth?"

"Not exactly, uncle," returned Rookwood, smiling at his uncle's discomfiture;
"niece to a miller, I said, not his daughter."

"And dost thou think such a person fitting to be the bride of a Rookwood?"

"Fitting, but not likely to be the bride of a Rookwood, good uncle, would it were otherwise for she is worthy to be the wife of an Emperor."

"But then she is a miller's daughter, Walter."

"His niece I again tell thee, good uncle."

“’Tis all one. I’ll find thee here on thine own grounds a couple of score of miller’s nieces and daughters, too, who will gladly take thee, good Walter, without a penny in thy purse. A miller’s niece, eh? and what then is the parentage of this paragon?”

“Her father was a soldier of fortune like myself, one who rose by merit in his profession.”

“And the mother?”

“An Earl’s daughter; sister to the old Earl of Desmond.”

“Come that’s better; and where say ye dwelleth this fair enemy of thine?”

“She dwells, good uncle, as I before told you, in the vicinity of London upon Barnes Common, not far from Richmond, and now

that you have put me to my purgation and learnt all I have to tell, let us e'en seek our truckle beds, for, sooth to say, your day's hunt hath in some sort wearied me."

"And to-morrow, then, you leave me, good Walter," said the squire. "Remember your promise to return as soon as may be. Meantime I promise in return to seek this fair maid, and, credit me, I fear not but that I shall succeed."

"Would it were possible," said Rookwood sighing; "and so good night, good uncle."

CHAPTER XXII.

KING JAMES reigns in England now. James the First of England and Sixth of Scotland.

But a few weeks have passed since the Tudor passed away, and see the change. "Is it the same England?" some men say as they walk and talk in old Pauls.

Truly it is the same; look around and about. The quaint streets with their beetling

houses are the same, Finsbury fields is still covered with windmills. All-Hallows the less, Cole Harbour and Bridge Street, now Coleman Street, and Pauls and Chepe ; shops, people, all are the same, and yet there is a change, a mighty change. People seem to feel that they do not live under the lioness now—the bold Tudor. For with all her faults she bore herself like an English queen after all, as the successor of the fiery Norman monarchs, and her own fierce and terrible sire.

A Scot hath it now ; and by're lady, the streets themselves can find as much out. Elizabeth carried a bold front as she progressed on her magnificent steed through the city at times. This man hath but a shaky look and a shaky seat ; he seems propped up

on cushions as he rides. There is a want of all, of everything that a king should have. Still he is a king, there is no mistake about that; and perhaps a more cunning, more shrewd, and more politic knave never sat upon the throne of any country.

"He's a cunning Scot, that," said one of the actors of the Blackfriars, "and by're lady, we must speak by the card here, or equivocation will undo us."

His pedantry, and his overweening opinion of his parts and his erudition, were as great as had been the insatiable vanity of his predecessor on account of her beauty. It was all pedantry now, a domineering pedant was lord of all; a most profound scholar no doubt, a wonderful specimen of erudition and wisdom; a Solomon as

he loved to hear himself termed. Men now had to look back and recollect all they had learned under the ferule. The wise Solomon would sometimes gratify his vanity by asking a beruffed and puffed out official to go through the syntax, or to construe a line, to tell him off-hand the preter-pluperfect tense of a verb.

He hated Raleigh with a deadly jealous hate from the very first, for Raleigh was too brilliant for him; Raleigh saw through the man, his meanness, his duplicity, the shallowness of his little knowledge, so artfully set forth. He was not a man that Raleigh or any other bold upright soldier could reverence. His propensities were so horrible; Raleigh, the brave, the chivalrous, was too brilliant for such a king to endure,

and in time he had his head off accordingly.

He hated anything brilliant. The great wonder is, that one so envious, so jealous of all that was bright and excelling in the land, could endure Shakspeare and his surpassing plays. A poet, who although at this period of his career he was in comparison but half appreciated by the many, was still by the few, and especially so by those near the throne, considered a wonder of art and genius. It is a marvel, we say, that the narrow-minded pedant did not in some way try to suppress and demolish him too.

But the fact is, the mind of the man was quite unable to comprehend the greatness of Shakspeare, or to quite appreciate his

works. He loved to sit at a play, and dally with his male flirts and favourites there, and in so doing he encouraged the players; but a good Jonsonian masque, turgid, long-winded, and stuffed with bombast withall, was much more to his taste.

But immortal Shakspeare took himself off to Scotland, and "Macbeth" was the consequence. He stood upon the spot where "the supernatural soliciting" took place upon the blasted heath; there where the witches stopped the way of Banquo and Macbeth. Nay, he breathed and felt the air of Scotland, so sweet, so balmy, so gentle at times. He stood beneath the towers of Macbeth's stronghold, and even pictured the swallows building on buttress and tower, and coigne of vantage, whilst heaven's breath smelt

wooningly there. And there he conceived and wrote that wondrous drama, a drama that will live as long as the English language lasts.

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps on in petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time ;
And all our yesterday’s have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.”

But still to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow shall see Shakspeare’s name still foremost amongst men.

* * * *

The Lord of Boughton Hill was as good as his word. He got up one fine morning after his nephew had left for Poland, and donned his clothes, and called his familiars

about him, and ordered a certain number of his falconers, and a picked company of his huntsmen and foresters to get themselves endued in their best and bravest attire, and hold themselves in readiness to take the road on a journey of import, and the next day he set forth to pay his duty, and in fitting guise, according to his ideas upon the subject, to go a-wooing into Surrey.

It was quite a progress, for the old gentleman was as precise and as particular when away from his own domain, as if surrounded with all appliances at his own home. He had his own ideas or rather fancies about travel, and if he had been about to encounter the wilds of Africa, he could not have been better provisioned and provided. Of all things in the world to be

encumbered with, he must needs on this occasion carry a pack of hounds in his train ; and this, together with his hawks, his waggons, and his tents, made it look like an expedition of import.

Dire were the disputes and quarrels whenever he did condescend to enter a hostel *en route*, as his servitors were so fully imbued with the great importance of their lord, that they seized upon all and everything they or their train required, as a matter of right. They considered that their master's purse could command, and ought to command any and all things, and as dogs, hawks, and their etceteras were all in all in their esteem, they carried on bravely along the road.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR Kentish Squire staid a whole fortnight in London, so well pleased was he with all he saw there, and with his visit altogether. He was a constant attendant at the Theatre of the Blackfriars, to him a new pleasure, and to picture his delight there would indeed be difficult.

He became greatly pleased also with mine hostess of the "Warwick Arms," with

whom he had also become acquainted ; and finally he took rooms in her house ; his hawk, and dogs, and most of his followers being still quartered out in Finsbury Fields.

At length, however, he took leave of the metropolis, and went on his way to Barnes Common, there to execute the mission he had imposed upon himself, and play the suitor for his nephew to the fair Geraldine Maynard.

“Marriage, however, is a matter of more worth than to be dealt in by attorneyship,” and so our Squire found.

The old gentleman, who had marched his train to Barnes with all form and ceremony, pitched his camp in a convenient spot upon the Common there, and then

waited upon old Maynard in order to make his acquaintance.

Almost all men in those days were more or less sportsmen, especially those who passed their lives in the country; accordingly the Squire and the Miller—both of them being good honest English hearts, without guile or deceit—soon became fast friends, and the former taking one day “a pliant hour,” whilst himself and host were sitting alone and enjoying a cozy pipe of the Indian weed, and a quiet tankard, opened the subject he had so much at heart.

The Miller stared at the Squire, and the Squire stared at the Miller.

“My certes! but this is strange gear anyhow,” at length observed Master Maynard; “do I really understand thee aright,

good Sir? Dost really and truly mean to say that at thy years thou wouldst offer marriage to our Geraldine?"

The Squire saw he had been misunderstood, and as he felt rather amused at the mistake, he determined to encourage it.

Meantime the Miller began to think all the less of his new friend.

"The domains I hold in Kent," said the Squire, "and in other counties in England, too, will surely help to do away with disparity in years, good Master Maynard. What say'st thou, good heart?"

"Not in my mind, not in my mind," returned Maynard somewhat tartly. "In our station, good Sir, we think not of riches so much as being mated suitably."

"Nay, but surely a rent roll such as mine,

good Master Maynard, I again say, ought to smooth all difficulties and disparities in regard to age. Nay, many a courtier's daughter would jump at such an offer."

"Best carry your offer to court then, and put your good gifts in the market there," returned Maynard.

"Nay, but I had rather offer them to your charming niece," returned the Squire laughing.

"In good time then, here she comes," said the Miller, not a little tickled at the reception his new friend would be likely to receive from the independent spirited Geraldine.

* * * *

From the first moment of seeing her on the first visit he had ever paid to Master

Maynard's cottage, the good Kentish squire had been impressed with Geraldine's surpassing beauty, and a further acquaintance with her amiable disposition had still more interested him. He looked upon her as something surpassing, as most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable, yet a woman withal, and a very lovely one to boot.

He always rose from his seat when she entered the room, and he did so now, albeit Geraldine, who had been up at Walsingham House, where she was a constant visitor upon the widowed Lady Sidney, would most willingly have dispensed with all such formality.

Tripping lightly into the room—something evidently having put her in good spirits—she advanced to the Squire, and frankly took his hand.

"I have paid a visit, good Master Boughton," (he had not yet told his real name), "to your little camp upon our Common, and looked at your falcons this morning. Say, when shall we have another day in the marshes?"

"When thou wilt, lass, when thou wilt," replied the Squire; "the sooner it be the better."

"I should like to have a flight to-morrow, then, an' ye list," said Geraldine. "And those dear old dogs, too," she added, "I love their honest faces more than I can describe."

"Love me, love my dog," is an old saying, Geraldine," said her uncle. "Truly thou may'st have dogs enough, and their owner, too, an' it so please ye, lass," he added in an under tone.

Geraldine turned a startled look upon her uncle, and then glanced at the Squire, whose eye twinkled, whilst his whole expression exhibited the admiration he felt; and then she turned the subject in an instant.

"Here is a sealed packet, uncle," she said, "from one we dearly love and esteem; a letter descriptive of scenes in the north."

"From Scotland, eh, lass?" said Master Maynard eagerly. "From Will Shakspeare, I'll be sworn. Thou shalt read it to us, lass. 'Twill be indeed a treat after supper. But come, girl, I must tell thee, there has been money bid for thee to-night, lass."

Again Geraldine looked somewhat curiously at the Squire.

"You know I like not joking upon such subjects, uncle," she said.

"Nay," returned old Maynard, "but joking apart, lass, I must needs do my duty by thee in all things, and in all sober sadness thou hast had an offer of marriage from our friend here. This man of many thousands and many lands. Certes, he hath this day offered marriage to the niece of old Ralph Maynard, the Miller of Barnes Common."

Geraldine looked at her uncle; she seemed at first to think he was joking; then she turned and made the Squire a low curtsey, somewhat in the mocking vein perhaps, but still with all deference and respect.

"Good Master Boughton," she said, "I feel bound to you for the great compliment you have paid me—and assuredly no man

can pay a woman a greater compliment than to offer to make her his wife—”

The Squire would fain have interrupted her, but she waved her hand, and continued.

“You will, I trust, pardon my plain dealing, if I say to you that I could never wed with one so much older than myself, let his rank and fortune be what they may.”

“But I pray you hear me further, good Mistress Geraldine,” interrupted the Squire. “I have a very different suit to urge.”

“None that I can grant, good Sir,” said Geraldine. “Believe me, my mind has long been made up on that subject; I shall never marry.”

“Tut! tut, say not so—say not so,” returned the Squire; “I did but jest, or rather

your good uncle here did utterly mistake me. 'Tis not for myself, good Mistress Geraldine—I am not altogether such an ass as that, for what saith the old song ?

“ ‘ Crabbed age and youth
Cannot live together.’ ”

“ Yours is not a crabbed age, good Sir,” returned Geraldine; “ we at least have not found you otherwise than right pleasant, and companionable. But, come, let us have done with this subject for good and all.”

“ Not till I have fully explained myself, and repaired this mistake, good Geraldine,” returned the Squire, taking a chair and setting himself before her, for hitherto in his excitement and agitation he had paced up and down the room. “ Yes, you shall

hear me out, good lass; you shall hear all I have to say, and then do as you list.'

Geraldine stood and looked at him in some surprise, expecting what further he could have to say to her; and the Squire went on.

"I have a nephew, good lady," he said; "one I dearly love, as much for his good gifts as for his near relationship to myself, and because he stands between me and other kindred whom I hate and despise."

Master Maynard filled his pipe, for he had become a convert to the new fashion, and was now greatly addicted to the Indian weed, and drawing near, placed his chair close to that of his new friend.

"This boy, for I must still call him as I remember him in former days, hath, as you well know, suffered much persecution in consequence of his religion, but hath since risen to rank and fortune in foreign lands. He is my late brother's son, heir to all I possess. He hath received much succour in evil times at your hands, Master Maynard; at your own proper cost and danger you afforded him this. Yes, when others fell from him, when wretched and low he was bereft of everything, you and yours stood by, succoured and saved him."

The old Squire stopped in his discoursing, for he could not for the moment proceed.

Master Maynard began to see things clearly now, and after awhile the Squire proceeded,

“What *you* did for my poor boy in his extremity, Mistress Geraldine, I need not dwell on. How it hath wrought upon his affections in your favour, I need hardly utter. To look upon thee in all thy goodness and thy beauty, is to reverence thee, fair Mistress Geraldine; to love thee for thy good gifts, and for favours received at your hands, is to be all in all your worshipper. What will you have on’t; what more can I say but that I come a suitor for my nephew?”

“For him we know as Master Rookwood, eh?” interrupted old Maynard; “I would that you may have the tongue of persuasion in favour of that suit.”

Geraldine seemed annoyed and angered; this continued suit of Master Rookwood’s

was disagreeable to her. She considered that she had already and sufficiently shown her opinion upon the subject. She waved her hand as the Squire was about to recommence, and flatly told him the subject was utterly distasteful to her, and that she would hear no more.

"Nay, uncle," she added, "you are aware that I have some time back returned the noble gifts Master Rookwood so handsomely offered me, and in a letter I addressed to his house in Norfolk, sufficiently explained myself. I am no fitting mate, believe me," she added again addressing the Squire, "for one in your nephew's station. Anon, you will see that he will return with a wife in all respects more suited to the exalted position he has achieved."

The old Squire sighed; he saw it would be in vain for him to plead further; in short, as before said, that marriage was "a matter of more worth than to be dealt in by attorneyship."

"Ah, well a-day," he said again sighing, "I see that I must e'en give it over sweet Mistress Geraldine. There is one thing, however, which I trust you will favour me by granting?"

"Most assuredly," said Geraldine, "I will grant anything I can to one so good and so kind as you have proved yourself."

"It is to return the visit I have paid you here; to visit my poor domain in Kent. Yes, yourself, and my good and worthy friend your uncle, together with my

worthy hostess, Mistress Maynard ; all must come and pay me a visit at my poor house yonder in Kent."

* * * *

Such a suit as that even Geraldine found it easy to grant, and when the spring time arrived,

"The pleasant spring time,
When birds do sing,"

the Squire with his hunters and hawking train took leave of the sweet woodlands around Shene, and Richmond, and Datchet, and Old Windsor, and once more crossing the Thames at the Blackfriars, sought his own county and his own moated home.

* * * *

It was unlucky, perhaps, for one so

susceptible of an early impression—one so unselfish as Geraldine Maynard, one in whom all estimation of her own merit was absent; it was unlucky, we say, that a being so constituted should have fallen in with such a mortal as William Shakspeare

She felt that no other ought ever to succeed to the place he held in her esteem and admiration, and love, and so she resolved that none other should ever hold a place where his image alone habited and dwelt

“In her heart of hearts.”

She knew his story now. She knew the history of his career; his early marriage; his boyhood's love; and the shipwreck of his

young life. She knew, (for she had heard all about Shotterry and its rural beauty, and its May of love and life there) the cottager's daughter of mature age, and the youthful poet, who threw his heart so foolishly away, and was driven from his home by her shrewish tongue and "curs'd" temper, even more than by his wild pranks in the woodlands.

"Let still the woman take one older than herself:
So grows she to him,
So sways she, level in her husband's heart."

Yes, the man was driven from his home, from his hearth, from his native town, by an impracticable woman, one who turned every blessing into bane; one who hourly hurt his feelings, outraged his daily life, and

took a pleasure in thwarting every pleasant hour he might have passed.

“The venom’d clamours of a jealous woman
Poison more deadly than a mad dog’s tooth.”

That he was such a man, only made him worse in her esteem.

There are a sort of women who seek to tread a husband under their very feet ; there are women who will set even a man’s children against him ; mar every delight of his life, and glory in their ebullitions and exhibition of temper, and yet class themselves amongst the “unco’ good.”

“A young man married,” says Paroles,
“is a man that’s marr’d.”

The gentle Shakspeare was wedded to a

virago, and consequently was a man marr'd in every sense of the word.

Who can be surprised then if one day he was missing from his native home, driven thence, not so much by the justice,

“In fair round belly, with good capon lined,”

as by a bad wife.

She hated poetry, she loathed the sight of a book—pens and ink she was even envious of; neighbour Constance, the grocer's wife, she was jealous of; Dick the tanner's daughters; Maud, Marian, Madge, and Mopsey, all were subjects for her hot indignation and jealous hate.

She drove him from his room, from his chimney corner, from his house; at meals even she allowed him “no sequestration, no

retirement," 'twas all reproach and bitter irony.

The man fled from the horrors of such a life, fled from a country town, and became—the Wonder of the World.

Yes, he fled from his native town, and then see what he found amongst the men and women he mixed with; a queen regarded him curiously; the choice and master-spirits of the age were his familiars. The courtly, the noble, the chivalrous, who like himself were all playing their parts, all, we say, were his familiars and his friends.

* * * *

And this man of men, when he unbent, and sought amidst rural enjoyment to daff the world aside, and to mingle with the new found friends he had discovered apart from

the busy throng of courtiers; when he thus sought for and found a leisure hour to contemplate, to look around, he discovered a jewel beyond price, an Eve for his paradise. Too late he found her. But still, "infinite in faculty, in apprehension so like a god," "this paragon of animals" loved the gentle Geraldine.

No, Geraldine would never wed, she affirmed. She had walked, talked, and associated with Shakspeare in all innocence and truth; he had spoken to her in a tongue not elsewhere heard on earth. And so it was that Geraldine felt she could never be the bride, the companion of any other than he who had drawn the characters of Hamlet, and Romeo, and Ophelia, and Rosalind.

* * * *

And so it was, as before hinted, Shakspeare went to Scotland. His "giant, grasping brain" was now girdling the wild untamed north with a chain of gold, and his lines of beauty and power in facile touches piecing out the terrible story of MACBETH.

"How far is't called to Forres?"

The poet in his wanderings stopped and glanced around upon that blasted heath, 'twixt Nairn and Forres. A more dreary piece of moorland is hardly to be found in all Scotland.

"Light thicken'd; and the crow
Made wing to the rocky wood,"

As he stood upon the heath there, whilst

“Imagination bodied forth
The form of things unknown.”

It must, we say, have seemed somewhat strange to the sometime dweller in fair Warwickshire—that county so fertile and so verdant—as he gazed upon the weird and wasted spot upon which he now stood. The desolation of the scene increased as the mists and fogs began to settle down upon the blackened pools around; the whole scene becoming more and more suggestive of the doings of those “secret, black, and midnight hags” with which he has infested it. Nay, solitary and enshrouded by the deepening shadows, he himself must have looked like some “unreal mockery,” some weird spirit or ghost, as he at length glided onwards through the pathless waste, and belated and awearied.

"Spurr'd on apace to gain the timely inn."

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Long the poet wandered in that lonely locality, and much he became impressed with its aspect; for even from the mouth of the valley of Diriebright down to the gorge of Aultmuniack, and to the shores of the wild waters, he might have gained legends and stories of witch, warlock, and of "devilrie."

* * * *

The story of Macbeth was well known to the poet even before he visited this locality. He had perused it in the chronicles from which he derived so many other materials—Holinshed—and here as he journeyed towards the sea-shore, was still to

be seen the remains of the Scottish stronghold in which the "deeds of dreadful note" had been perpetrated.

"The castle had a pleasant seat."

The air around was delicate.

"——— No jutty frieze,
Buttress, nor coigne of vantage"

on which the temple-haunting martlet had built its nest, did the poet fail to note, as he stood there, and thought upon the foul and unnatural murder which traditionary lore has fixed upon the spot. There was indeed a peculiar charm in the scene, a secret horror seemed to pervade those thick-ribbed towers, and the loop-holed raggedness of its circling walls; and the bat had already flown his "cloistered flight,"

"And the shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy
hums,
Had rung night's yawning peal,"

ere he could tear himself away from the
locality.

Several of the co-mates and brother actors
of Master Shakspeare were at this very time
performing in the "gude town of Aberdeen."
Jovial light-hearted fellows they were.
Lawrence Fletcher was there, and John
Hemings, too, and Henry Condell; together
with Will Sly; and Bob Armyn; not to
mention Richard Burbage, who seldom
failed to bring down the house, and split the
ears of the groundlings when he so listed.

Meantime, the great poet himself wan-
dered back from Inverness, and put on
towards Perth; and as he stood on the

proud heights of Dunsinane, his capable eye glanced around the counties of Angus, Fife, Stirmond, and Erndale lying beneath him.

“ He look’d toward Birnam, and anon,
The wood began to move.”

The Dunsinane Hills form a long range north-east from Perth to Glamis, and the poet had engaged to meet his brother actors in Edinburgh, thence to proceed across the border. Accordingly, after many a lingering glance at the scene he was leaving, he turned his face southward.

From the northern capital, where he rejoined his companions, to London, was a lone and perilous journey in those times ; and our readers would perhaps have been sur-

prised, rather, had they beheld the warlike guise in which this jolly troupe of actors travelled homewards. Passing through Eskdale and Teviotdale was in itself somewhat of a difficulty; nay, but a few short years earlier, when Lord D'Acre "kept the border," such a venture would have been impracticable, from the fierce nature of the rapacious snatchers and border warriors who infested every rock and craig. The present band of comedians, together with their following, and the many others who took advantage of their companionship and escort, formed, accordingly, quite a formidable band, having its front and rear guards, and all and sundry necessary against attack.

* * * *

As he passed through Warwickshire, the

poet sought his family and friends; certes, he had vowed in his heart and in his ire when first driven thence, never again to set foot within his own doors, or even to revisit his native town; money, and good gifts, and plenty thereof, as he had thriven and prospered, had he remitted and transmitted often and often; and both his parents and "Kate the curst"—otherwise Anne his wife—had benefitted and thriven thereby; but himself he had denied. Now, however, whilst he wandered and pondered in the north, these bitter feelings had somewhat subsided.

"Consideration like an angel came,
And whipped the offending Adam out of him."

Gentle and affectionate, it was not in his

nature to visit the sins of others "too roughly," even when practised against himself. For in him there was the absence of all arrogant self-love, and all those pharisaical pretensions to an austerity of excellence high above the average composite of good and evil in ordinary mortals, and which grows out of the inordinate admiration for self, and the want of general sympathy for the infirmities of others. The charitable consideration of the influence of circumstances upon human conduct was most apparent also, and so the poet revisited the sweet locality in which his friends dwelt, and there set himself to work to put together the drama his visit to the north had suggested.

But, "Heaven save the mark," things were no whit better now than before. Reproach, retort, rebuke, and quarrel soon

made head against his peace, his comfort,
and his way of life; nay, he might have
said with Rowe, in his "Jane Shore,"

"Are you wise?

Have you the use of reason? Do you wake?

What means this raving, this transporting passion,
These never ceasing wailings and complainings?"

And so it was that "vexatious days, and
jarring joyless nights," again drove him
forth to seek some safer shelter, where he
might rest his weary wings in peace. And
so Shakspeare was now again in London, and
his old haunts beheld him once more, and
Old Paul's, and Chepe, and Clement's Inn
knew his footsteps and rejoiced. But there
was a new world now, and a new monarch,
too, and the Scot was cocking his bonnet

amongst the citizens, and a fresh set of courtiers, too, had sprung up, and this man of men was, we say, there amongst them all, and his pen and his brain were again at work. See, too, with what speed he writes, and how he moves his companions of the stage as they get up the new play. Then, again, fancy the drolleries, the repartee, the lightning flashes of his wit, and the thunder peals of laughter; what a contempt of criticism, and what a hailstorm of applause and fine things.

* * * *

The sweet woodlands and sylvan glades around the domain of our old friend in Kent, were graced and enlivened about this time by the presence of Geraldine Maynard and her uncle, who had kept to their promise,

and were now on a visit to the Squire's stronghold in Boughton Woods. It was indeed pleasant to see, when together with their right pleasant and merrie conceited host, they went forth to hawk, to hunt, and to course in the woods and fields. All day, and every day almost, did they "fleet the time carelessly," with hawk and hound, "as in the golden world."

And so it was, that as old Maynard had resolved to give up the management of his business to his son Hodge, lately returned from abroad, both himself and Geraldine almost lived at Boughton; and Geraldine became all in all a huntress, and was never so happy as when in the saddle and with the pack.

This was delightful to the Squire, inas-

much as his nephew, after having made trial of a country life, had found it so intolerable to his spirit that he had again left England. He was evidently of a roving unsettled disposition. That unconquerable thirst for adventure which urges men to relinquish the things in immediate possession, for the "will-o'-the-wisp of the future," possessed him wholly. Monarch of all such men had been his friend Raleigh, and most abundant of all ages in such men was the age in which he lived. And so good Master Rookwood now a General and a Count in the service of Poland, threw up his employment abroad, and his "retired leisure" at home, and together with other adventurous spirits, turned his face towards the Ocean.



One evening our old friend the Kentish Squire sat in his hall at Boughton, Master Maynard on one side the chimney, pipe in mouth, and chalice in hand, with several guests and friends around, discussing ever and anon the politics of the hour, and between whiles chaunting some ditty, whilst the serving men cleared the table for supper.

The last rough days of a stormy November had left every bough and branch in the forest bare, and the blast howled without as they sat carousing; nay, if our readers could have looked in upon the party, they might in something have been reminded perhaps of Olivia's dwelling in Illyria; such a "caterwauling and singing of old ditties, without any mitigation or remorse of voice,"

did these two old crones and their guests squeak out ever and anon between their more serious converse.

"Come, a stoupe of wine, good Master Maynard," said the Squire, and then another stave or stanza.

"Come, another chalice, I say, for the nonce; and by're Lady, we must drink to the prosperous voyage and safe arrival of our sweet Geraldine."

"She hath set forth to foreign parts, as I hear," said old Bassett, who was one of the Squire's guests, "in order to attend the dying bed of her mother."

"She has so," returned Maynard, "together with my old dame, and under escort of my son George; she set off last week for Normandy."

"Certes," said Bassett, turning towards the casement, and listening to the wind without, "this is rough weather for a sea voyage. But well betide her, go where she will, say I, and Heaven send her safely back to us here."

"Amen to that wish," returned the Squire. "And so then, Master Maynard, this friend of thine, this Master William Shakspeare, hath again, I hear, brought forth another drama. By the Lord Harry, I must e'en go up to town to see it, an' it be true."

"It is true," returned Maynard, "and by accounts I gathered ere I left Barnes, 'tis a more exquisite thing than any he hath yet written."

"Tush, tush, man," said Master Hum-

phrey Pierpoint, another of the Squire's guests, and who was a writer himself, and a great friend, too, of the Poet Green; "this new play, my masters all, might in my opinion very easily excel any other that this same Shakspeare hath produced, and yet be no great matter either. By the same token, it is but a sort of quick ey'd fanciful production, writ perhaps at random o'er a flaggon of ale."

"Fie on't," returned Basset; "be not so severe, Master Pierpoint; you like not the man, and therefore eschew his good works."

"I confess it, I confess it, Goodman Bassett," returned Pierpoint; "for in good sooth, look ye, what are his works but blank verse on the wing of imagination?"

"Pshaw!" said Bassett to himself, "what an ape it is."

"And which," continued Pierpoint, "albeit such verse should energise with natural potency and grace unshackled—"

"Anan," uttered old Maynard, looking puzzled and provoked. "The man speaks somewhat querely, Master Bassett, eh?"

"Yes, unshackled, I say, by the necessity of pausing at each line; producing, I may add, harmony and melody in all appropriate variety of moderation; in this man's hand, look ye, is emotionless, without clearness, difference, pregnancy, or grace."

As Pierpoint paused for want of breath, Master Bassett rose from his seat, took a turn up and down the hall, and then hummed a tune.

“ ‘The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo,’ ” he said, as he re-seated himself and resumed his pipe.

“ See, too, the reckless carelessness, the gross ignorance of the man,” continued Pierpoint ; “ he maketh, for instance, a bear, look you, tear out a man’s shoulder-blade on the shores of the sea, such sea being in the very midst of an inland country. Oh, rare Ben Jonson, most consumedly did you laugh at that.”

Master Bassett again rose from his seat as Pierpoint again paused. He felt “ anger’d to the heart ” at this abuse of his friend.

“ Prometheus filched fire from heaven,” he muttered, “ and had for reward the craig of Caucasus and the vulture. Pshaw, this is but a paltry whipster after all ; he would

fain stab my valued friend to the heart, but can hardly even annoy him with pin pricks." So saying, he betook himself in pure disgust to his truckle bed.

Pierpoint was about to begin another long tirade, when Master Maynard interrupted him.

"Oh, Lud! oh, Lud!" he exclaimed, "prithee, stop in your wind, Sir Knave, and fill and pass the flagon. 'Fore me, I profess that I comprehend nothing; no, not a single sentence thou hast uttered; neither do I think thou dost quite understand it all thyself; howbeit, this I do know, and think I remember to have read in one of the very dramas thou hast so railed on,

"If to do, were as easy as to know what 'twere good to do, chapels had been churches,

and poor mens' cottages princes' palaces.'
Go to, let's have another cup, and
another stanza, and then to bed, for, sooth
to say, we must be up betimes i' the morn,
an' we mean to have good sport in the
woods."

As the Squire spoke, he refilled his pipe,
stretched his heavy booted legs out before
him, and soon his nasal organ gave token
that he was in the arms of Morpheus ; and
as the owl whooped without, and the ruddy
glow of the half expired logs shone fitfully
upon the walls of the old hall, sleep fell
upon the rest of the party ; and as doubtless
our readers are by this time equally somno-
lent, we will for the present leave them to
their repose.

END.









